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THE RENAISSANCE AND ITS MAKERS

ERASMUS, BY HOLBEIN

(In the Louvre)

This marvellous piece of portraiture dates from the year 1523. Holbein painted many portraits of his friend and patron, and at least three belong to this year, one being at Longford Castle. A study for the one reproduced here may be seen in the Basle Museum.

THE
RENAISSANCE
AND ITS MAKERS

BY

J. D. SYMON

AND

S. L. BENSUSAN

63562

ARMS OF PIERO DE' MEDICI

LIBRA
OF THE
BOMBA
BRANC
OF THE
ROYAL ASIATIC

WITH MANY ILLUSTRATIONS

VX-C-57

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PREFACE

THIS book is intended for the general reader, to whom many things which are the merest commonplace to the expert have been explained as if they were not already well known. Consequently there has been much traversing of old ground. But the writers, while offering no new material, venture to hope that they may at least have presented the established facts in such a way as to bring into interrelation and new prominence main factors in the movement that have been in some measure left out of account elsewhere. The view, for example, of the place occupied by the Emperor Frederick II. may be challenged as an over-statement, if not outside the question, but they have been forced to the opinion that, although Frederick's work as a statesman was almost immediately swept away by the political storms that rent Italy after his death, his attitude towards the things of the intellect must, in a character that so entirely captured the imagination of Europe, have left a deep impression on the minds of thinking men. In his own person and pursuits, Frederick realised with extraordinary completeness the attributes of those cultivated despots whose patronage made the great revival possible.

Similarly, the use made of the half-forgotten figure of Etienne Dolet as a rallying point about which to group the men who led the beginnings of the Renaissance movement in France, may savour somewhat of disproportion, but in a study that attempts to outline the social intercourse as well as the works of the pioneers, Dolet seemed to find his place as a vital centre, above all as storm-centre. The French Renaissance was pre-eminently a period of stress; the Revolution was one of its descendants and modern French Art is another. This is true, also, no doubt of Germany, but there the

Renaissance is lost in the Reformation, whereas in France, despite the equally acute religious controversy, it persisted for long as a distinctively literary movement. In the account of Spain also the conclusions and the general view will be found to depart from accepted tradition.

The value, or otherwise, of these views will be assessed by competent critics. To these the writers with due modesty submit the present essays, to which they have given more than three years' collaboration. They believe they have not misled those to whom the book is primarily addressed, those readers who, attracted by the works—an ever-increasing body of publications—dealing with special branches of the subject, seek for some succinct account that will portray the main outlines in a familiar manner, and shall at the same time present the principal actors in their habit as they lived. Above all, an effort has been made to illustrate the essential unity of the movement, however divergent may have been the characteristics it displayed in different countries and generations.

Without pretending to completeness of detail, this sketch (for it can hardly be considered anything else) has striven after a broad and, in spirit at least, a comprehensive treatment. If their survey should, in any slight degree, put the general reader in possession of a view that may help to co-ordinate the teaching of more original and more minute accounts, they will feel that they have done what they set out to do. Their book, they know, is *crambe repetita*, but with a purpose. On that alone they plead justification.

Perhaps, too, this restatement of old problems may help somewhat towards a better understanding of the present day. We have left or are leaving behind the ideals from which the Renaissance developed. The ancient classics are at a discount, and the present age calls aloud for science. But it was from the labour of pure scholarship that modern art, literature, and science sprang. Almost the last of the great names in the following study is that of Francis Bacon. He came late into the heritage of the Renaissance, and at a time when its brief flowering in England was almost over, but he

realised in himself the Italian ideal of the universal scholar, and going further, founded modern scientific method. For the moment, it would seem, merely literary culture and scientific specialism are at war. But a better appreciation of the rock whence they were hewn may yet reconcile the apparently irreconcilable. A fuller understanding of its intellectual ancestors might perhaps make this generation less hasty to deny them and the forces that went to their making.

J. D. S.
S. L. B.

January 1913.

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The Picture entitled 'The Duke of Urbino at a Lecture,' and attributed to Melozzo da Forli, is here reproduced from the Windsor Collection, by gracious permission of His Majesty the King.

THE RENAISSANCE AND ITS MAKERS

CHAPTER I

THE MOVEMENT CALLED 'THE RENAISSANCE'

THOSE who are attracted for the first time by the Renaissance, that brilliant period of development in æsthetics, art, scholarship and social and political life, may imagine it to have been a spontaneous development. We know that the fifth-century invaders of Gaul and Italy swept away the Roman schools and dealt knowledge such a stunning blow that for three hundred years it seemed to lie lifeless in Europe, so lifeless indeed that the work of Augustine, of Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, of Baeda, and Alcuin did little more than make the surrounding darkness visible. But there is an old saying among the Jews that the Messianic era opened on the day when the second Temple was destroyed, and the truth that this expression conceals is of universal application. We have long given up all belief in spontaneous generation, and to savour the true sense of the Renaissance must recognise that there was no more spontaneity in its uprising than there is in the arrival of the flowers that starred the woods in spring. They did but wait for a favourable opportunity, hiding out of sight until the season could offer them the necessary environment. The sixth, seventh and eighth centuries in Europe were one long winter, and if in the seclusion of religious houses a little scholarship bloomed it could not thrive beyond the cloistered walls. Gothic architecture may be said to have led the way, to have inspired men to dream dreams and see visions. Charles the Great (768-814), and more than a century later Otto the Great (936-973), had some prescience of the dawn of a new era and helped in their way to speed its coming, but so long as knowledge was in the hands of the Church, the Scholastic

Philosophy was the dominant force, and until it yielded to Humanism, the system of thought in which the human interest is dominant, it was not possible that the tree of the Renaissance should blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit. While the Scholastic Philosophy prevailed we find in the wider sphere of life nothing more than the pathetic attempts of the few to arrest the attention of the many. These attempts, often brilliant, were short-lived.

The dawn of the Renaissance woke finally at the coming of the pioneer of the fourteenth-century humanists, Petrarch. The light began to glow strongly in 1341, when the poet was crowned with laurels in the Capitol in Rome, and in the period of less than two hundred years that separates Petrarch from Pope Leo x. the whole period of the revival of learning had come and gone. This arrangement of the years is a little arbitrary. It does not take due count of the Religious Renaissance which was in being in the thirteenth century in the time of the great Franciscan, Roger Bacon, and his contemporary, Nicholas de Lyra. Before the fourteenth century dawned English scholars were translating the Old Testament from Hebrew into Latin. The Registrum Librorum Angliæ, product of a careful investigation of the monastic libraries, was compiled in the middle of the fourteenth century; but while we must admit the beneficent activity of a few great scholars and thinkers who laboured in the service of the Church, it remains clear that the Renaissance as we know it could not have travelled far under clerical guidance: as soon as it showed any tendency to break bounds it would have been strangled in middle Europe as surely as it was strangled in Spain. If the revival of learning brought about the Reformation, and so much may be said with certainty, it was the revival beyond and not within the cloisters, and if the efforts of the scholars and thinkers who gave to Italy her most glorious years were supremely successful, it was because the soil upon which the seed was planted had been slowly preparing to nourish it throughout the long centuries of darkness. Even when the Renaissance, as we know it in its most ebullient aspects, had passed, the truths that it had taught remained. Some linger to this day, and have influenced life down to our own times. Certainly the Renaissance produced Rousseau and the Encyclopædists, who

in their turn brought about the French Revolution. The theme is fascinating but beyond the proper limits of such a book as this; we must return to the years that followed the crowning of Petrarch and the triumph of the humanistic idea.

Towards the end of the fourteenth century the great scholar Chrysoloras came to lecture in Florence, and gave to eager and enthusiastic audiences their first glimpse of the Greek culture that had lain for centuries lost. It is impossible for us who have been born to enjoy as much of the fruits of this culture as we have the leisure or capacity to assimilate, to realise the full extent of the revelation. We can but remember that much of the joy of life as we know it now was banned and barred when Chrysoloras appeared to the Florentines. The delight in youth for youth's sake, the joy in the human form, the untrammelled expression of that joy in terms of art or letters was unknown. Heine has told us of the fate of the Olympians when the Christian era had dawned, and underlying his satire is the foundation of solid truth. Pan was dead, the Fauns, the Dryads had passed with him. Venus had gone and Mount Ida was untenanted. The thousand voices that spoke in the Greek poets were dumb. Horace was unknown, Virgil disguised. There was not in all Italy any sense of the pagan joy in life with which few of us could dispense even to-day, when Pantheism plays no inconsiderable part in all our thought. We can realise what the coming of Greek culture meant to the Florentines, and how their young enthusiasms responded when a new world, beautiful beyond all existing forms of expression, was spread before their eyes.

It is a common mistake to believe that Greek culture came to middle Europe with the fall of Constantinople. In point of fact it preceded it by more than fifty years, and as delight in the new learning spread there were many to take up the burden of teaching. The great scholars who were summoned to Italian cities by their rulers were enthusiasts; they had a few pupils, men of natural aptitude for scholarship, who learnt all they had to teach and made their own excursions down the long untrodden paths of learning. Thus Petrarch had a pupil, known as John of Ravenna, who taught in Padua, that ancient city of light and knowledge. Other great teachers were Vittorino of Feltre and Guarino of Verona,

and Italy showed herself as eager to recover the lost glories of scholarship as she has proved of late to recover the more doubtful glories of empire.

It was a strange world, and one whose shortcomings we can hardly realise, but it is well to remember that it was a world without dictionaries, treatises or biographies, and that the revival of learning preceded the appearance of the printed word. There were rare manuscripts in abundance, for the most part in the keeping of religious houses, whose custodians could not always read them, and doubtless many works of supreme importance have been lost to the world for ever, for the attitude of the conqueror towards books may be summed up in the words of the great soldier of Islam who condemned the library of Alexandria: 'If they uphold the Koran they are unnecessary, if they do aught else they are dangerous.' Even in cases when rare manuscripts were not ravished by the spoiler, even when they came into the hands of those who respected what they could not always understand, there was the ever-present danger of fire in days when every building was inflammable, and it is matter for congratulation that so much survived to the time when printing could spread the thought of one man to the homes of thousands, and nothing that was so widely diffused could be for ever lost.

Cosimo de' Medici, the real founder of the great Florentine house, was one of the first Italians to establish libraries. He gave San Giorgio Maggiore to Venice and San Marco to Florence, and his work in so doing had the double value of accomplishment and stimulus. Another man who has left his mark upon the revival of learning was Tommáso Parentucelli, who coming first into prominence as a protégé of Cosimo de' Medici, who made him librarian of the Marcian Library, was destined to ascend the Chair of St. Peter as Pope Nicholas v. It was through him that many of the Greek classics were first translated into Latin, and when he died his library held nearly twelve hundred manuscripts in these languages. Symonds says that under Nicholas v. Rome became a vast workshop of erudition, a factory of Greek and Latin translations. The sudden sense of a splendour beyond mental grasp came upon the Italians. They realised that the Roman soil which covered so many masterpieces of an older world was sacred, and among the Bulls

issued by Pope Pius II. there is one of the year 1462, in which he seeks to protect the remains of old Rome, where Vandals of his own time were playing havoc, stripping the marble from forgotten buildings and monuments to burn it for lime.

More than thirty years before Pius II. had been stimulated to preserve the remains of Rome we find the establishment of academies. That great scholar Filelfo would lecture in Florence to as many as two hundred people in one day, dictating to them passages from the classics and adding his own commentaries. Politian, tutor of the children of Lorenzo de' Medici, carried on the work, and it may be that some will find in the teaching of Vittorino da Feltre, who has been already mentioned, the seeds of the Positivism of Auguste Comte, for all that da Feltre was a churchman and devout. It appears to the writers that this Positivism, which is a force in England to-day and was brought to this country from Paris by Frederic Harrison, is one of the late fruits of the Renaissance in Italy, and by no means the only one.

The time of Lorenzo de' Medici, particularly the years between 1469 and 1492, when there were academies in Rome, Naples and elsewhere, and the German invention of printing was entering Italy to become famous through the establishment of Aldo Manuzio's press, mark the highest achievement of the Renaissance. After Lorenzo, the Italian Renaissance enters its last period, to die with the Sack of Rome in 1527. The circle of Lorenzo was so brilliant that after more than four hundred years it is impossible to contemplate it without a sense of delight. He was at once a man of thought and of action, and sought to reconcile these two great forces in human life, just as his friend Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who translated the Cohortatio ad Gentes, definitely attempted to reconcile Christianity with Greek thought and Judaism.[1] Others of the circle that met in Lorenzo's palaces to talk of all that was stirring the minds of men were Michael Angelo, Politian and Landino, the choicest spirits of their age, men whose memory claims our unstinted reverence to-day. The flowering period of the Renaissance ennobled scholarship and came near to obliterating class distinctions, and in the time of Lorenzo the fall of Constantinople had multiplied

[1] He it was who wrote 'Philosophia veritatem quaerit, theologia invenit, religio possidet.'

scholars. They came from Byzantium to middle Europe with no other equipment than some manuscripts and some knowledge of their worth, and found a nation waiting to welcome them with open arms. Learning became a fashion. The encouragement of scholarship was accounted a virtue. Art, no longer the handmaid of the Church, though still largely dependent upon religious patronage, manifested itself in immortal forms. The era of the production of masterpieces has not been rivalled by any epoch to which history gives us a key. It was an age of great personalities. Genius was to be found on the highway and in the byway, and a country's riches were estimated to no small extent by the number of its artists and scholars. Ambassadors sought the services of scholars and artists for their masters. Scholars themselves were employed as ambassadors.

The establishment of the Aldine Press in Venice brought England into touch with the great movement that Manuzio was stimulating through the medium of books that were sold at prices within the reach of poor men. Erasmus, who was nearly twenty years younger than Manuzio, lived with him in Venice for a while in 1508, and was the first really popular writer in Europe. Intensely religious in the best sense of the term, he sought to popularise the Scriptures through the medium of translation and paraphrase, and saw in the revival of learning a weapon with which to combat his three greatest enemies, ignorance, immorality and imperialism. He carried the ripe fruits of his intercourse with Manuzio to Cambridge as well as Basle, and the spirit of the Renaissance that came with him across the Channel led to the foundation of St. Paul's School, Christ's Hospital and Westminster School, and gave us in due course the Elizabethan Drama, and the forces that resulted in the recognition and encouragement of Shakespeare's universal genius.

Just as the Renaissance may be held to have given Shakespeare to England we may say that it gave Cervantes to Spain. Another great Spaniard is associated with the movement—one whose work has not yet received full justice in this country—Cardinal Ximenes of Alcalá. It is to him that a spirited attempt to present a complete Bible is due, but from the beginning the Jesuits and the Inquisition in Spain looked askance at the new Humanism, and they strangled it before it was strong enough to stand alone. The student who has

the time and the will to investigate the brief and chequered history of the Renaissance in Spain will find much of absorbing interest.

France seemed to feel the new movement seriously about the middle of the fifteenth century, and as was remarked before, its fruits are still apparent. Perhaps the most direct children of the Renaissance in France are Scaliger, Casaubon, Rabelais, Ronsard and Montaigne. It is wrong to suggest, as is so often suggested, that the Italian influences did not survive the sixteenth century in France. In Germany, where the printing press contributed the most notable service to the new movement, Humanism was the forerunner of Reformation. The most outstanding figures are, of course, Rudolf Agricola, Reuchlin, Melanchthon and Luther, and some study of the lives of these men will help to make clear the forces that impelled and directed their life-work.

Any survey of the Renaissance, however brief and incomplete, must help to show the extraordinarily stimulating character of the movement. It urged the most diverse people to labour to one end, the freedom of the spirit of man. It was a dawn following the night that fell when the Vandals of the fifth century swept away all traces of culture, and so many records of past civilisations were buried beneath their tracks. In the larger sense it gave birth to a spirit of progress that is living yet, and that birth was marked by the creation of masterpieces that stand unrivalled to this hour. That the season of enthusiastic progress should have endured for well-nigh two hundred years is in itself astonishing, and we can see now that, so much having been accomplished, the silence that followed the Sack of Rome in 1527 was of less importance than it must have seemed to late sixteenth-century observers.

It is inevitable when we look at the Renaissance that we should see it in the light of great men, and in accordance with the side of life that appeals to us most, should turn in one direction or another to find the figures that illumine and illustrate clearly the whole period of European rejuvenescence, nor is it unnatural that some countries should have disputed with Italy the credit that is hers. Walter Pater has reminded us that many French writers have claimed for their country the real beginnings of the movement, quoting Dante as one of their authorities, and tracing Boccaccio's stories from earlier French Fabliaux. But Pater recognises how

many forces there were at work in the world that served, in his own fine phrase, to turn the rude strength of the Middle Age to sweetness. French patriotism can blind no thinking man to the truth that the springs of the movement did not begin to flow in one country alone. It was one of those divine events towards which all creation moves, and our surest guide to its origins is found in the lives of the men who in so many countries led the van of a movement that, whether it wholly succeeded as in Italy, or largely failed as in Spain, was nowhere quite without lasting achievement. And this habit of turning to the record of individuals for the study of a movement in which they played their part is reasonable enough, for in the lives of men and women who helped sometimes, in spite of themselves, to spread the light, whose works reflected influences of which they themselves were not always quite conscious, we find a reflection of the Renaissance itself which is wholly and unmistakably trustworthy. We learn that such a peaceful upheaval as the Renaissance brought about has an enormous creative force. It produced men and women of the first order, statesmen, soldiers, poets, sculptors and painters, and curiously enough even the greatest rogues who came to the front had a quality of genius that their morals, or lack of morals, could not corrupt. Machiavelli, Benvenuto Cellini, Alexander VI., the great Borgian Pope, his son Cæsar Borgia, and his successor, Giuliano della Rovere, Julius II., to name but a few, owed no small part of their uncommon gift to the spirit of the times; for all their faults, and they were many and varied, they stand remarkable in the annals of men. Nor are the women to be overlooked; the wives of Piero and Lorenzo de' Medici, Beatrice and Isabella d'Este, Bianca Maria Sforza, Lucrezia Borgia and Vittoria Colonna, to name a few of those of whom in due course this book must take note, were the proper products of the Renaissance, and do not live for us merely because of the portraits painted by, or attributed to, Titian, Botticelli, Da Vinci, Bronzino and Marco Palmezzani. The curious may speculate if they will upon all the talent, one might almost say genius, that must have been lost by the ruthless conditions of life in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, when no man was allowed to cumber the way of those who were stronger than he, and in the eyes of all who ruled the end justified the means. The Renaissance, not alone in Italy, knew a

wasteful efflorescence, but then waste is the law of Nature, who, as Tennyson says, out of a thousand seeds often brings but one to bear. Though the activities that were wholly lost, the lives that perished, and the endeavour that never came to fruition, may sum up to a giant total, the record left is beyond us, and it may be said that what remains is more than we can hope to grasp in its entire significance. In future chapters some attempt will be made to deal in detail with the various forms of activity and accomplishment in their proper division, but it must not be forgotten that they are all to be regarded as the varied expression of one mighty movement, and that this movement was limited to the Christian civilisation, which had groaned in turn under the burdens of black ignorance, and the hardly smaller trouble of a Scholastic Philosophy that had not found and did not wish to find the spirit of Humanism.

To sum up the conclusions that the foregoing pages have striven to set out, the Renaissance is very largely the recovery of what was best in the thought and the art of two forgotten civilisations, the Greek and the Roman, of which the latter had been in a sense the result of the grafting of thoughts and ideals upon a sympathetic stock. The knowledge of the existence of these treasures had been held by a very few, and some at least of those who had the knowledge must have refrained deliberately on religious grounds from disseminating it. The lost civilisations being opposed to the spirit of Christianity as it was then could hope to receive but little help from within the Church, and for centuries the Church was the sole repository of learning and of culture. Through centuries disfigured by every kind of violence, and in no way distinguished for morality, the secret remained hidden, nor would an earlier revelation have served any useful purpose since it was necessary that the minds of men should be prepared through long years to welcome the revival. Under the influence of the Church, knowledge did indeed develop, and to no inconsiderable extent, but it was not of the kind that serves humanity at large, and it sought at most to preserve no more than one aspect of a forgotten culture. In France there was a miniature revival bearing the date of the thirteenth century—a revival of singular interest, worthy to be studied—but it had not the quality that makes for endurance, and was no more than an

indication of the truth that the spirit of man was stirring in the darkness, just as in the Bible story of the Creation we read that the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. It was left to Italy to make the movement European, partly by the rediscovery of her own hidden treasures, and partly by the splendid encouragement that her leading men and women gave to the scholars of other lands, who brought their gifts to an eager people. Gradually the movement spread until all western Europe had felt its influences, and when the first great flame died down after the death of Pope Leo X., it left a glow that has not yet entirely faded.

CHAPTER II

FREDERICK, EMPEROR, AND FRANCIS, SAINT

In the dawn of every great world-movement the Time-Spirit becomes incarnate in certain individuals, who, long before the movement has grown definitely articulate, reach forward to the new age and exhibit, in their life and work, its salient characteristics. It may be that their work is obscured and even obliterated by the contest of older forces not yet broken and subdued, and that they themselves are not clearly associated with the departures they have helped and heralded, but they belong none the less to the later and more progressive age, and their contribution to history, once viewed in the light of their anticipative mentality, falls into its due place in a scheme from which they seem at first sight far enough removed. Those pioneers are called, in common phrase, 'men before their time.'

Such precursors were not wanting to the Renaissance, and those men who are unmistakably allied to the great revival have had their due share of recognition. For the most part, however, the so-called precursors are precursors only because of the historical error that assigns an arbitrary beginning to the Renaissance period. Such a beginning it is impossible to fix. The only fruitful method of regarding the origins of Modernity is to recognise that the Time-Spirit had been informing mankind by a gradual and unconscious process towards this great end for centuries before the new movement became apparent. The lamp of learning, as we have seen, had never been wholly extinguished, but it is not as a mere literary restoration that the Renaissance is to be viewed. It exhibited in its ultimate manifestation forces retrogressive as well as progressive, and it had to do not merely with scholarly questions, but with art, politics, science—in a word, with all that made up the sum of human life. It evolved a type of character not free from defects, yet great alike in its strength and its weakness. And this character,

strangely enough, was manifested, already almost completely developed, in a single individual more than a century before Petrarch, the first modern man, was born. The complex tendencies of the age that was to come cannot be fully traced and analysed here, but they can at least be understood by the consideration of one tremendous figure, whose influence as a forerunner has been but scantily recognised. In him, before the Renaissance was, were revealed all the salient characteristics of the new age, save one, that of the religious enthusiast. Yet so consistent was the Time-Spirit that it did not leave even this particular out of account, and within the self-same period it raised up another forerunner and originator, who manifested in himself, with a completeness the Middle Ages had not known, the man 'drunken with God,' who was, out of his very asceticism, to point the way to that joy in nature and in art, to that perfect realisation of humanity, which was the guiding principle of the new revelation.

These two great figures of the early thirteenth century, figures utterly antagonistic in their attitude to life, lie, strictly, somewhat outside the period with which these studies are chiefly concerned, but neither can be left out of account. The place of one, the devotee, in the scheme of the Renaissance has already been abundantly recognised. There are some indeed who consider him the true father of the movement, and in the domain of art, at any rate, they make out their case. The other, the statesman, has hitherto hardly been regarded as a man of the Renaissance at all, for his career was clouded by failure, and his work was swept almost out of remembrance by the turmoils of Europe in the years immediately following his death. But it is impossible, on a right and careful reading of his life and character, not to trace in the Emperor Frederick the Second, the 'Amazement of the World,' as Matthew Paris calls him, a man informed by nearly every quality, good or bad, that we associate with the leaders of thought and action in the great re-birth. His greater contemporary, who, armed not with mortal weapons, but with the sword of the Spirit, fought a different fight for freedom, was not destined to see his work perish before his eyes. Although he died a quarter of a century before Frederick, Francis of Assisi already had seen his labours established among men to whom he had brought not a sword, but

peace, and a more excellent understanding of God and of the world. Yet to him, too, was denied real permanence. The next generation arose alien to his ideals. The world was not reformed. The mission of Francis had been numbered among the glorious failures of earth.

Like all forerunners, Frederick and Francis were the product of their age, although they outran its prevailing tendencies. It is that which makes them significant to the present inquiry, which is to emphasise the existence of the Renaissance spirit long before the movement, in its special manifestations, had become visible to mankind. The old error, that finds the origin of the new forces in the arrival in Italy of the Hellenists exiled from Constantinople, need not be combated at this time of day. Sufficient recognition has already been made of the work that was done by inquiring western minds before the great teachers from the east appeared on the scene, but it is necessary to go further back, to set the mere revival of learning in its own place and to regard the Renaissance as something far wider than a reawakening of interest in the classics of Greece and Rome and in the art, philosophy and manners of the ancient world.

For if the Renaissance was a re-birth, it was also in a very real sense a birth. It was no mere imitation, no mere attempt to recreate and restore, no effort to live in the moonlight of a sun that could never rise again. It had in it the quality, the vitality of its own modernity. It was the birth of a temperament, of an attitude towards life, that was not Greek, not Roman, not even wholly Italian, a temperament that embraced the whole scheme of things earthly and heavenly. Not in art and philosophy alone, but in politics and social questions men were reaching forward to new views, to a wider and freer outlook. These processes had been at work long before they became conscious activities. But in days of transition some minds respond early to the impulses that are silently at work below the surface, and these richer and more impatient spirits start forth, in sharp antagonism to their times, to realise, often with startling completeness, the ideals of a later age. Their own period, as a whole, may show little promise of the changes yet to be, but in these men, as by a miracle, appear the temper, the thought, the activities of a society as yet unborn. And so, in the first half of the thirteenth century, while Mediævalism was as yet

unshaken, we find the ideals of the Renaissance embodied, diversely yet unmistakably, in Frederick Hohenstaufen and Francis of Assisi.

However great and pathetic may have been the failure of the Franciscan Mission, its informing influence upon the Renaissance, particularly in art and poetry and in the new joy of life, is clear and definite. The influence of Frederick is a more obscure—perhaps a disputable—thing; for his achievements were swept away almost as soon as he himself had disappeared from the stage where for forty years he played so brilliant a part. But those who read his life aright and interpret with sufficient attention his attitude towards his times, are forced to the conviction that, but for the great Hohenstaufen, men would have had to wait longer for the new age. His works perished with him, the old tyranny rioted unchecked over his grave, but he had turned the thought of mankind in new directions. It was not for nothing that during forty years Europe had watched one man standing single-handed against the forces of ancient authority as embodied in the Papacy. Insensibly their minds were permeated with revolutionary ideas, and a new conception of freedom was born into the world. Not that Frederick categorically formulated these principles—he was a doer, not a doctrinaire; but by his long warfare, by his ultimate contempt of the ban of excommunication, he had shown the nations a new conception of the individual. He had shown that a man could dare to contravene authority and live; he could even live victoriously. Such an inevitable modification in the thought of his contemporaries was bound to react on the thought of their sons and of their sons' sons. That Matthew Paris should have nicknamed Frederick the 'Amazement of the World' is sufficient proof that he had captured the imagination of his times, and when we come to trace in that kaleidoscopic character every attribute of a prince of the Renaissance, statecraft, generalship, the love of luxury, of scholarship, art and poetry, a strange Oriental licentiousness, a deep scepticism beneath the outward profession of orthodoxy, a real enthusiasm for popular education and enlightened government, magnanimity, and yet, on occasion, the most ruthless cruelty, Frederick declares himself as an anticipative type, an early flowering of the spirit already stirring among mankind. The completeness of that flowering was due to the completeness of Frederick's genius. Before the world

was ready fully to receive the new message, Frederick was ready; he responded to the promptings of the *Zeitgeist* and stood forth as the marvel of his age. Not so much by what he did as by what he was, however, is Frederick to be taken as an informing force. His works perished speedily, even his memory faded with strange suddenness. But subconsciously his influence remained. Nations unaccustomed to liberal ideas had seen in the man who was secular head of the western world for nearly forty years a protagonist whose entire policy and way of thinking outstripped his own age. Without realising it, men had received the first great impulse towards the realisation of individualism.

By descent half German, half Sicilian, Italian as to his birthplace, Frederick exhibited the fiery temperament that is inseparable from mixture of race. Born at Yesi, near Ancona, in 1194, he was orphaned in his fourth year by the death of his father, Henry VI., who left him to the care of his mother, Constance, heiress of Sicily. Constance made interest for her son at the Papal Court by acknowledging herself the vassal of Innocent III., and the Pope took a lively interest in the boy. He was liberally educated, and was even instructed in Oriental languages, a circumstance of deep significance. When Frederick was eighteen Innocent supported him in his attempt to wrest the imperial crown from Otto IV. His campaign was a royal progress, but in its brief course, although he encountered few difficulties, he already showed those qualities of dash and hardihood which in after years found their finest expression in the memorable and brilliant manœuvre that precipitated and won for Frederick the battle of Cortenuova. The German people were glad to welcome the grandson of Barbarossa, and with the Pope's sanction the young man was crowned in 1215 at Aix-la-Chapelle. His holy foster-father was not, however, unafraid of the youthful firebrand, and turned his thoughts to a policy of insurance. The price of coronation was a vow to undertake a Crusade which, the Pope devoutly hoped, would exercise the young sovereign's energies at a safe distance from the empire.

But the Hohenstaufen had his eyes open. The vow could wait for its fulfilment. Meanwhile Frederick's aim was to consolidate the imperial power in Italy and to reduce the Papacy to a mere archiepiscopate. Outwardly at peace with Innocent, he carried on

for years a diplomatic war with the Pontiff. Again and again the promised Crusade was postponed, in spite of pontifical reminders and threats of excommunication. In 1220 he was crowned Emperor at Rome, and thenceforward he was but little in Germany. Side by side with his warlike endeavours to unite the Italian states, a task made difficult and finally frustrated by the refractory Lombard cities, Frederick toiled to promote social reform and to encourage the humanities. Pietro della Vignea, his chancellor and friend—their friendship, alas! ended dismally—drew up, by the Emperor's instructions, a code of laws that for enlightened wisdom and equity had no rival in Christendom; at Frederick's brilliant and none too straight-laced court poets, artists and scholars were secure of a welcome and encouragement; the Emperor founded the University of Naples and fostered the medical school at Salerno, and to these graver pursuits he added the art of living. Sport, culture, love; the flight of a falcon, the epigram of the scholar, the chanson of the troubadour, the embraces of a mistress—for all these Frederick found time. Whatever he did he did with splendid thoroughness; with him the Dark Ages have little in common, save his cruelties, and these link him no less to a later period. With all his faults, and they were not few, he was a centre of life and light.[1] Teutonic strength and Sicilian passion united to make him the most meteoric figure of his age. The life of his court during his occasional periods of retirement in Sicily might be that of the Vatican or of Florence in the full tide of the Renaissance.

Side by side with the 'Amazement of the World' there grew up a man, whose fame, although he sought it not, was also to fill Europe with astonishment, whose life and work were destined to prove in a more direct and easily discoverable manner than that of Frederick one of the springs of the Renaissance.

Francis, known to the world as 'of Assisi,' was born in 1181 or 1182; the exact year is doubtful and immaterial. He was the son of a rich merchant of Assisi, Pietro di Bernardone, and his wife Pica. Even before his birth, a mystical atmosphere surrounded the future saint. His after greatness was foretold by a passing pilgrim to whom his mother had given alms. The prophecy, such

[1] See Gebhart, *Origines de la Renaissance*, vi. 5.

SALT CELLAR OF FRANCIS I. (FRONT AND BACK),
BY BENVENUTO CELLINI

Vienna Museum

(Reduced to about half the actual diameter)

as it was, had in itself probably no more significance than any other fair words of a beggar who sought to make pleasant acknowledgment of benefits received, but Pica, an imaginative and superstitious Provençal woman, kept the words in her heart. They coloured all her feelings towards her child, she spoke ecstatically of her hopes to her neighbours, and it was she who fostered and developed in her little son that ardent sensibility, that good humour and that pure enthusiasm for all that is noble which were afterwards to mark the man. In Francis there was to be revealed a new temper towards this world and the next; he was to stand out from his time a figure unique and powerful even in its weakness, a formative force in directions of which he never dreamed. His peculiar mission as saint and reformer was to end too soon in virtual failure, and that although he instituted a tremendous 'movement,' as our modern phrase runs. But his teaching, his way of life, his attitude gave a new turn to human thought. He did not reform the world, as he had hoped. Friars of his great Order were afterwards to incur, with other religious, the odium of satirists for men no better than they should be; but, in a secular sense, Francis remained one of the most vital initial forces of the coming revival. In the intellectual Renaissance he had no part, but among the precursors of the New Age he stands pre-eminent as the emotional well-spring. A poet, he composed sacred canticles in a familiar vein, his life was in itself a perpetual lyric, that passed after his death into something approaching an epic. For the legend of St. Francis, a thing more forcible than even his teaching, had laid such hold on the minds of men that it became the inspiration of a new pictorial art. For Cimabue and Giotto, Francis became the pivot of that artistic enthusiasm which, consecrating itself to the portrayal of the saint's life, works and miracles, laid the foundations for the after glories of Renaissance painting.

Francis, despite his asceticism, is the first and most complete expression and herald of the coming springtime of humanity. By a strange paradox, that macerated body of his housed a spirit in which the joy of life brimmed irrepressible and spontaneous as from a full cup. He would pause by the wayside to break into lyric exhortations addressed to all living things. He recognised the universal soul of creation, and called upon it ceaselessly to praise its

Maker. Did a grasshopper cross his path, straightway he apostrophised it: 'Sing, grasshopper, my sister, and praise God thy Maker!' and the creature, alighting on his hand, at once began her shrill song. To the beasts of the field, to the birds of the air he spoke in the same strain, and the birds alighted on his neck as he discoursed or played his viol to them. The vivacity of his Provençal blood moved to the rhythm of his thought, and it is recorded of him that once, as he preached before the Pope, his feet moved continually as the feet of one who dances.

Francis had abjured the pomps and vanities of this world, but he found himself in no opposition to the world itself. His followers were to keep their civic status; they were to be separate, yet in the world. Their separation was not that of the cloister. It is true that he denied the flesh, but not in the scornful spirit of a Manichee. The neglects and rigours, by which he wore out his frame too early, were only those of a man too much preoccupied with the things of the spirit to be careful of himself. At the end he recognised an error here. 'Greatly have we sinned against Brother Body,' he exclaimed, 'and now the penalty is exacted.'

Like many great saints, Francis, in early youth, had lived lightly. The sins of the convert are often written blacker than they were, but Francis could do nothing by halves. The young men of his time and of his rank took their pleasure as it came, and the chronicler Salimbene, for all his reverence towards the founder of his Order, imputes to Francis errors even of the grossest. He was, we know, a member of one of those fraternities described by Folgore da San Giminiano,[1] companies of well-to-do young men, who banded themselves together for mutual entertainment, and it was to this fellowship, strangely enough, that he first made known his vocation. After that illness of his, when he went forth, leaning on a staff, and found the face of the world changed to him, his serious aloofness drew from one of his companions the jesting cry that Francis was thinking of a mistress. He told them yea; he was indeed in love, and with the Lady Poverty.

Thereafter there was no turning back. At first his zeal was for the restoration of churches. The ruined chapel of St. Damien at Assisi was restored by his labour and his gifts. He made free

[1] For these societies see Rossetti, *Early Italian Poets*, Folgore.

with his father's stock-in-trade in order to provide the means for the restoration. At length his father sought to have him restrained as a madman, beat him and shut him up in his room. Finally, he broke away, literally naked, for he handed over to his angry parent even the very clothes he wore, and went out a free man, possessing nothing. Charity gave him a single garment, which he girded about him with a knotted cord, the symbol of his Order.

'. . . those
Whom now the cord girt humbly. . . .'

But gradually the Franciscan enthusiasm grew into something wider. Not merely churches, but the world was to be restored. With the institution and methods of the Friars Minor we are not here concerned. What is to our purpose is the character of their founder in relation to his age and the age immediately succeeding. In Francis, most highly spiritualised, there first appeared that great characteristic of the coming Renaissance, the discovery of the world of men. He conceived his followers as the little brothers of the human race, going through the length and breadth of the land to bring men back to a fuller knowledge of the love of God, a fuller joy in all His works. It was his singular good fortune not to be branded as a heretic, owing perhaps to the deep worldly policy of Pope Honorius III., who, seeing in Francis a formidable enemy if he were crossed in his mission, gave him and his companions informal licence to preach. By this master-stroke Francis was permanently held within the Church. If his doctrine were tinged with the teaching of Pierre Vaud, and there is reason to believe that it was, the Holy See ignored the possible heresy, and Francis remained always her dutiful and obedient son. The Pontiff's vision of the saint supporting the fabric of St. John Lateran confirmed Francis as a veritable pillar of the Church.

Francis, separated though he was from much that is typical of the Renaissance as we know it, was yet in a very special sense its greatest herald. Had his cause succeeded, the re-birth might never have reacted towards mere Paganism. For the saint of the Lord, life meant everything that was joyous, spontaneous and spiritually splendid. With material splendour he had nothing to do. But to him Life, Humanity and Nature were lyric as com-

pletely as they were lyric to a Grecian poet. He danced and sang for the sheer ecstasy of the dædal earth; for him Sun, Moon and Stars were brothers: he and they, the world and all that dwelt therein, were fellow-ministers of Grace. His Song of the Sun is the first full note of that native Italian poetry that was soon to echo through the spacious times of the Renaissance. His genius taught him to use, for song or sermon, only the speech of the common people, to whom his message ran. And in the mouth of genius that speech learned its first lessons of eloquence and beauty. A greater poet, building on the work of an intermediate line of singers, would before that thirteenth century was out lift the Italian speech to a sublimer plane. But he in another sense than Francis stands separate from the Renaissance, for if the saint was a perfect spiritual forecast of the new time, the poet was the last and greatest son of the expiring Middle Age. Francis looked forward, he anticipated something he was never to know and might not have approved. Dante, irredeemable in his scholasticism, looks ever backward, regretfully, to the simple pieties of the age of Bellincion Berti. For him there is no new time, save in Paradise. For him the next world is a fact apart from this. The fervour of Francis brought the two into fusion. Not altogether foolish or unmeaning is that Christmas legend which tells how Francis formed a crèche in the woods, setting up a manger and bringing thither, to complete the realism of the symbol, an ox and an ass. As he knelt in ecstasy before the manger, behold, his fellow-worshippers saw that in his arms Francis held in very fact the Divine Babe. The myth is symbolically true, for the temperament of Francis, with its simple and childlike delight in all things human and divine, was capable of that spiritual miracle, the realisation of Godhead in the material. Through sense he transcended sense; his vision in turn transmuted and deified the sensible world.

As a devotee, Francis expressed the reawakening impulses of his time which others expressed in a more worldly manner. It was the first breath of a coming dawn. 'All the men of that time had been seized as it were with something of a springtime mood; it was as if the world had begun to blossom again. This springtime of the soul, already naïvely manifest in the Provençal ditties, and expressed with greater freedom, north of the Alps, in the poems of Walter von

der Vogelweide, unfolded itself in no man more fully than in Francis of Assisi, and that, too, under all its forms—as a sensuous pleasure in the outward aspect of nature, as a tender sensitiveness to the picturesque life of things, as a response of the heart to all the voices of creation.' [1]

The appearance of forerunners such as Frederick and Francis, so different in themselves yet so close akin to the Renaissance spirit, is a fact that defies analysis. We can only observe and study them in the light of those succeeding periods to which they are afterwards seen to belong. To this we may apply the words of Symonds, spoken in a slightly other connection: 'To explain them by the hypothesis of a Weltgeist, a collective spirit of humanity proceeding in its evolution through successive phases, and making its advance from stage to stage by alternations of energy and repose, is simply to restore, in other terms, a mystery that finds its final and efficient cause in God.' [2]

[1] Henry Thode, *St. Francis of Assisi*, vol. I. chap. i. p. 5.
[2] Symonds, *Renaissance*, 'Revival of Learning,' chap. i.

CHAPTER III

ITALY BEFORE THE RENAISSANCE

FROM this consideration of two great precursors we may now turn to examine briefly the state of the country that gave them birth. The political history of Italy from the beginning of the Middle Ages to the dawn of the Renaissance presents a problem of extraordinary complexity. It is a tale of foreign incursion and conquest, of continual division of territory, of the rise and fall of the smaller states, of war, bloodshed, cruelty and crime, a tale of which one can indicate here only the barest outlines. But in those struggles and confusions we can see at work the forces that prepared Italy for that strange intellectual development that, in its earliest beginnings, defies analysis, and can only be detected after it has made some progress towards self-conscious expression. For centuries Italy had been a seething cauldron, a seething cauldron she continued to be even when the Renaissance was in its full flower, and when we turn our eyes away for a moment from the quiet studies of her scholars to the combats and cruelties of her princes and despots, we are amazed that such a movement as the Renaissance should have come into being at all. There was always something feverish in this manifestation, and that is possibly the reason why its brilliance was often so lurid, and why its brightest accomplishment passed so quickly into oblivion or decay.

It is necessary for the purposes of the present sketch to keep in view the leading political movements of Italy up to the time when the Renaissance becomes clearly visible, and also later as we trace its course through the strange and troubled times in which the new movement came to its full flower. It will be necessary to glance backward to the beginning of the Middle Ages, and to attempt to obtain in clear outline some idea of what befell the Peninsula after the passing of the Roman Empire. Up to that time Italy had been composed for the most part of the ancient Italian tribes, which had

been gradually welded into an almost homogeneous people under the sway of the Emperor. Italy, it is true, had from time to time known invaders, but while the strength of ancient Rome remained they never obtained sufficient footing on Italian soil to alter materially the old order of things. But with the final fall of the Empire and the deposition of Romulus Augustulus, Italy became the prey of successive invaders, who tore her in pieces, attacking her now from the north and now from the south, till all semblance of what she had been was blotted out. In the year 476 Odoacer, the Scyrrian, assumed the title of King of Italy. During his reign, which lasted until 493, the Ostrogoths descended into Italy through the valley of the Adige. Their first king was Theodoric, who held sway over northern Italy from 489 to 526. Forty years later the Lombard plain was overrun by the Lombards or Langobardi, under Alboin. They held the country for more than two hundred years, and divided it into thirty-six duchies. With Milan as their centre, they ruled over a northern Lombardy, and, pushing down the Peninsula, they founded also a southern Lombardy, with Beneventum for its capital. While a German people had thus laid firm hold on Italy, they yet did not succeed in subjugating the popes, who remained securely seated in the Chair of Peter, and maintained, with some shadow of power, the ghost of Italian independence. It was only a ghost—the Papacy could not stand alone, and had to look to France for aid. From necessity arose a momentous bargain, from which in turn sprang that romantic institution of the Middle Ages, that strange semblance of a power that once had been, the occasional nucleus of a power yet to be—the Holy Roman Empire. The popes still held that with them lay the traditions of the ancient Empire. Accordingly, in return for support in the field, they agreed to sanctify Charles the Great with the crown and the title of Holy Roman Emperor. Charles's family had held Lombardy from the year 774. On Christmas Day, 800, he was solemnly crowned by the Pope in St. Peter's. The spot on which the ceremony took place is still marked by a circular slab of black marble. About a century after Charles's accession Italy was attacked on the north by the Hungarians and on the south by the Saracens. At the same time another band of Saracens established themselves on the Riviera. The country was devastated with fire and slaughter, but these

incursions were not wholly without benefit. The towns fortified themselves in self-defence against the invaders, and so laid the foundations of those city states which were afterwards to play so vital a part in Italian politics.

But not only against the foreign invader had Italy to war. With the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire arose a friction between the Emperor and the Pope. At the same time the Emperor was at variance with the towns, of whose growing freedom he was jealous. After the time of Charlemagne the papal chair was occupied by a succession of weak popes unable to assert themselves against the imperial power. The struggle became acute between Gregory VII. and Henry IV. In Gregory the Church of the Middle Ages first found a genius for its ruler. It was Hildebrand who gave to the Papacy the prestige which it maintained with varying fortunes down into modern times. Hildebrand had made himself paramount in the Roman Curia long before he assumed the tiara. Before his own election he had ruled several preceding popes. When he came to the throne he determined to show the Emperor who was to be master. After a long struggle he crushed Henry, and forced him to do the famous penance of Canossa. For three days, amid deep snow, Henry stood barefoot in the castle courtyard at Canossa, begging for favour and pardon from the Pontiff, who sat unheeding within. At length on the third day Hildebrand, considering that Henry's humiliation was complete, permitted him to enter, and gave him the kiss of peace.

These contests between Pope and Emperor are of vital importance to the history of the Renaissance period, for they colour the whole disposition of parties throughout succeeding centuries. Amid innumerable contending interests of almost inextricable complexity two party names remain clear. The main question may be entangled with a hundred subsidiary issues, but the two great party names survive amid all disguises. These were the names Guelph and Ghibelline. It is impossible to turn a page of Italian history of the Middle Ages without finding a reference to these parties, and to the struggles arising from them which set state against state, city against city, and very often divided a city against itself. The names first came into prominence about the year 1125, after the death of the Emperor Henry V. The Salic or

Franconian Emperors, the descendants of Conrad the Salian, were known by the name of Waiblingen, from one of their castles in the diocese of Augsburg. The House of Bavaria, on the other hand, among whose princes the name Wolf often occurs, came to be known in familiar speech as the House of the Wolf. The intimate connection of these houses with the political struggles of Italy brought the two nicknames down into ordinary Italian speech. The uncouth German names were softened by the Italians into Guelfi and Ghibellini, and in process of time a Guelph came to stand for a Pope's man, and a Ghibelline for an Emperor's man. These differences are first clearly accentuated with the appearance of one of the most picturesque and romantic figures that ever held the Holy Roman throne. There is something strangely weird in the continued advance from the Teutonic north of one great and rugged figure, worthy to be the hero of a saga, who pushes over the Alps, and crushes the fair land of Italy in rude northern hands. Such was Barbarossa, Frederick Red-beard, who was elected Emperor in 1152. Two years later he came by the Pope's invitation to Rome. That invitation had been endorsed by the Prince of Capua and by certain northern towns that were groaning under the oppression of Milan, now become a considerable city. Frederick brought with him a great army of his German vassals. He crushed Milan and established Pavia. At Viterbo he was met by the Pope, whose bridle he held in homage, and for that act he received the imperial crown, and solemn consecration at the Pontiff's hands. Deceived by the apparent friendship of the Pope he dismissed his army, and had some difficulty in returning safe to Bavaria, but four years later he was back again with another host, and this time Italy felt his hand in earnest. He subdued Brescia and utterly destroyed Milan. For six days his army toiled at razing the walls and public buildings, so that when the Emperor left for Pavia hardly one stone was standing upon another. This violence entirely changed the attitude of Italy towards Barbarossa. Compassion for the wretched plight of Milan brought to her side the cities with which she had formerly been at war, and turned them to hostility against the Emperor. From this arose the Lombard League, by which the chief cities of the north bound themselves together to resist the imperial power. These cities were Venice, Verona,

Vicenza, Treviso, Ferrara, Brescia, Bergamo, Cremona, Milan, Lodi, Piacenza, Parma, Modena and Bologna. Their object was to expel the Emperor finally from Italy. The league was ill organised. It had no political constitution, the cities composing it had but one point of contact and agreement—the desire to expel the intruder.

Had any genius evolved for the league a workable system with centralised government and an equitable system of taxation, United Italy might have been anticipated by many centuries. As it was, the component cities, concerned with their own interests and jealousies, were always ready to fall out among themselves. The league was in a continual state of disruption. For six years Frederick remained in the north preparing vengeance. In 1174 he returned, and two years later, when he encountered the army of the league, he learned that even a politically weak confederation could be formidable as a military alliance with one set purpose. On 29th May 1176 Frederick was utterly crushed at Legnano. The date is dear to modern Italian patriots, who see in that victory a clear foreshadowing of the triumph of 1870.

The next great Emperor to fill the stage was the grandson of Barbarossa, Frederick II., of whose reign a more detailed account is given in another chapter. Frederick has been singled out here from particular motives, because he stands to a great extent apart from Mediævalism. In his private life, this accomplished scholar, soldier and statesman anticipates in a most striking manner the temperament of one of the great princes of the Renaissance. His reign, which lasted for nearly forty years, came to an end in 1250, and for sixty years thereafter no German Emperor was recognised in Italy. Individual states and townships were left to themselves, and out of the welter of their feuds and combats one thing and one alone remains clear—whatever they might be fighting for at the moment, the parties were always called either Guelphs or Ghibellines. Any party in a city that stood for liberty and self-government would be called Guelph. The party that favoured strong government, or even, it might be, despotism, came to be known as Ghibelline. In its essence the Ghibelline political ideal was a universal empire with Italy at its head; the Guelphs were Nationalists, who might have raised the cry, 'Italy for the Italians.' The moment, however, one begins to lay down these hard and fast

definitions for the two great parties contradictions appear. There were so many local and incidental exceptions. If we say that Ghibelline stood for despotism, what then of the patriot, Dante, who beginning as a Guelph ended as a Ghibelline, and did so without swerving for a moment from his loyalty to Italy and his hatred of oppression? The solution lies in Dante's case in the splitting up of the Guelphic party in Florence into the Bianchi and the Neri. Of these the Bianchi, although Guelphs, became Ghibelline in their tendency, and to these Dante was ultimately drawn.

Another point that led to differentiation was that the Pope, although Guelph *par excellence*, never scrupled when occasion required to call in external aid in order to further his own interests. This distinctly anti-Nationalist movement would estrange true Guelphs, and a Guelph estranged became, for want of a better name, practically a Ghibelline. But the tangle is endless. Gradually after the death of Frederick II., from causes too complicated to be traced in the present sketch, the towns of Tuscany were falling into Ghibelline hands, and at the same time the towns of the Lombard plain were insidiously falling away from the ideals of the Lombard League. It was little wonder that they should forget their ancient purpose, for they were being hounded to death by Ezzelino da Romano, an ally of the Emperor's, who had made it his business to crush the Lombard League out of existence. This he proceeded to do by a series of atrocities almost unparalleled in history. Wherever he passed, the fair Lombard plain was blackened and devastated, its cities fell in ruins, its citizens were maimed, tortured and slaughtered. Padua was a charnel-house, the whole country was a sink of misery. In 1255 Pope Alexander IV. proclaimed a Crusade against Ezzelino, who was now supreme in Verona, Vicenza, Padua, Feltre and Belluno. The Crusaders, with the Venetians at their head, carried Padua by a brilliant stroke. In revenge Ezzelino, recognising that a large portion of his own forces had been recruited from Padua and the surrounding districts, put all these men to death. He went on from horror to horror, and subjected the citizens of Priola to a like fate. He spared neither age nor sex—he had no mercy on infancy—he maimed and blinded the whole of the citizens of Priola, and sent them to crawl through the country in their wretchedness. Finally the monster was taken, but he evaded justice by his own hand.

His fall brought little advantage to the Guelphs, for the Pope was beset by Ghibellines on the north and on the south. In the latter quarter the leader of the party was Manfred, the son of Frederick II. Affairs in the south were complicated by the intrusion of the House of Aragon and of the House of Anjou into the politics of southern Italy. Manfred had been fiercely attacked by Pope Urban IV., who on succeeding Alexander IV. in 1261 had set himself to the revival of the Guelphic party. Manfred proposed to marry his daughter Constance to James, King of Aragon, and this match the Pope opposed. Finding that Manfred was stronger, Urban sought help from Louis IX. of France, and offered at the same time the crown of Naples to Louis's brother, Charles of Anjou. Charles got ready to invade Italy, and Manfred prepared to oppose him with his Saracens; but at this moment the Pope died, and was succeeded by Clement IV., who by a common fiction of the times proclaimed the war against Manfred a Crusade, and invested the soldiers of Anjou with the status of Crusaders. Manfred was routed at Beneventum, and Charles, who had already been crowned King of Naples and the two Sicilies by commission, established the Angevin power in the southern kingdom. A few years later a gallant attempt was made to overthrow him by a natural son of Manfred's—the boy Conradine—who although only eighteen years of age played his part with all a man's resource and courage. There are few more striking examples than Conradine affords of the curious fact that the men and women of those ages grew up far sooner than is the case with ourselves. They came to maturity quickly, and they seemed to have been able to press all the experience of a lifetime into one or two years, closed more often than not by an unhappy death. The boy Conradine had just been married when Manfred fell at Beneventum. He was urged by his comrades to avenge the defeat, and the entire Ghibelline party of Tuscany, which had seen a great revival at Florence immediately after the disaster of Beneventum, promised Conradine their support. The young leader was at that time resident with his mother Elizabeth at the Court of Bavaria. On finally deciding to take up arms, he parted from his mother and his wife at the castle of Hohenschwangau, memorable once more in our own times by the romantic friendship of the mad Ludwig and Richard Wagner. For a short time Conradine's

movement prospered. His father's Saracens were active in Apulia. Florence, Pisa and Siena received him with enthusiasm. Rome and Sicily were with him. He resolved to march upon Naples, but at Tagliacozzo he was met by the Guelphic force under Charles of Anjou, was routed and taken prisoner. Conradine was carried to Naples, where, after a mock trial, he was condemned. In prison he bore himself with that delightful mingling of insouciance and dignity which characterised in that age the men of breeding. The boy was playing chess with his cousin Frederick when they brought him the summons to the scaffold. Regretting that he could not finish his game, he arose and accompanied the executioner. His last words were, 'How will my mother grieve when she hears of this!' With Conradine the Hohenstaufen line became extinct. They were a marvellous but somewhat futile race. In Manfred, the poet, and in Conradine, the chivalrous adventurer, we can catch an echo of the spirit of their grandfather Frederick. But at the best it was only a faint flash of that commanding genius, which in the end was as unfortunate as their own. The incident of Conradine is one of those crucial episodes that throws into high relief the gulf that separates those times from our own. Yet we have to go back little more than two hundred years to find an almost complete parallel to it in the death of Monmouth. One month after the execution of Conradine, Clement IV. died, and the Holy See was vacant for forty-three months. This enabled Charles of Anjou to consolidate his power in Sicily and Naples. The next Pope was Gregory X., memorable for his crusading enthusiasm. In order to rescue the Holy Land he set himself to reconcile the warring factions in Italy, and for a time composed the differences of Guelph and Ghibelline.

While the principal powers thus warred and intrigued in Italy, the Italian towns were no less actively engaged in dissensions which had also a private character. Pisa and Genoa had long carried on a commercial feud, which ended at last in the battle of Meloria, in which Pisa was utterly overthrown. From that blow she has never recovered, and to-day she is a dead city. After Genoa had struck the decisive blow, all the other chief towns made haste to complete the destruction of Pisa. In the other towns also an important political change had taken place during the years in which there was no regular occupant of the imperial throne. The Free Communes

were gradually losing their independence, and tyrannies were springing up. At Milan, after the fall of Ezzelino, the House of Dellatorre held sway for a while, but they were supplanted in turn by the families of the Visconti, and later by the Sforza. Verona was in the hands of the Della Scala, who kept their place for more than two hundred years, and maintained a reign that is great in the annals of learning, for they entertained Dante, and they gave to France the scholar Julius Cæsar Scaliger, and his son Joseph. At Ferrara the House of Este reigned. Tyranny was longer delayed at Florence; nearly two centuries longer had to elapse before the Medici declared themselves as despots.

From this record of political confusion one great name is practically absent. Amid these strifes it may be asked, What of Venice? It is true that she appears occasionally as an ally, or even for a moment as the leader of an alliance, but for the most part she stands aloof, secure amid her lagoons in the north. Venice had a wider outlook than the mere party faction that was rending Italy. Gradually she was realising the idea of a republic, which was in time to pass into an oligarchy, and when that oligarchy was narrowed once more, to end in the tyranny of the Ten. Her work lay for the most part outside the borders of Italy. She had dreamed of an Eastern Empire, and, when her merchant princes had made the establishment of such an empire financially possible, she set herself to the conquest of the Mediterranean and of the Grecian Archipelago. Consequently the period that saw Genoa equally active in commerce, spending her substance on self-aggrandisement and on the destruction of Pisa, saw Venice fostering a widely imperialistic view, and going her own way to secure her end, mingling only in the domestic disturbances of Italy, when a temporary alliance or an incidental expedition served her as a counter in the greater game.

With the curious tendency of political parties to merge into one another, we find at the beginning of the fourteenth century that the ideal of the Empire became the principal hope of such liberal thinkers as Dante. In his *De Monarchia* he developed the idea of beneficent despotism as the highest good for the state, and when at last an emperor, if not of strength at least of action, held the imperial throne, Dante fixed his hopes upon a revival. In the

coming of Henry VII. into Italy, the poet and others of his party believed that they saw deliverance for Italy and a composition of all strife under one rule. But the hope vanished as it had risen. Henry came, and saw, but he did not conquer. As he moved southward his presence at Milan was taken advantage of by the crafty Visconti, in order to overthrow their rivals, the Dellatorre, and bring the city into their grasp. They pretended to Henry that the Dellatorre were the authors of a disturbance which they themselves, the Visconti, had really fomented. Henry fell into the trap. He deposed the Dellatorre, and left Mafeo Visconti his vicar in Milan. His mission, which Dante had dreamed would be so glorious, came to nothing, and his sudden death in the autumn of 1313 left Italy in greater confusion than it had been before his advent. The strife of parties continued, and centred for a while at Genoa.

From Genoa, Henry passed to Pisa, where he was offered the overlordship of the city, and was presented with a large sum of money. The Pisans thought that by thus favouring the Emperor the city might regain its old supremacy in Tuscany, but these hopes were not to be realised. By way of Orvieto and Siena, Henry marched on Rome, which he found split by a sharp party contest. The Orsini family and the Guelphs were fortified in the Leonine city, the Colonna and the Ghibellines held the Lateran and the Colosseum. Henry had to fight to enter the capital. He forced his way in, and was crowned, and then began his march northward. Re-entering Tuscany he wasted Florentine territory, and then, his troops being stricken by pestilence, he suspended operations and returned to Pisa. There he held a court, at which he deposed Robert, King of Naples, the grandson of Charles of Anjou. Having received large reinforcements from Germany and Italy he attacked Robert, upon whom, as a sort of counter-move to Henry, the Florentines conferred the lordship of their city. All was ready for a decisive struggle when Henry died suddenly at Buonconvento. His death left Dante and his fellow-patriots widowed in their hope of a united and pacified Italy.

Here we reach a point well within the period in which, without laying down too rigid lines, the Renaissance may be said to have begun. Dante is in the full power of his genius; Petrarch is a schoolboy at Carpentras, near Avignon, laying the foundations

of that enthusiasm for classical literature which was afterwards to make him the leader of the Humanists. Despotism was gradually laying a firmer hold on the leading cities of Italy. In addition to those we have already mentioned, Mantua had fallen into the hands of the Buonaccorsi, who, when the second half of the fourteenth century had just begun, were succeeded by the more famous Gonzaga. Ravenna was held by Guido Novello da Polenta, the friend of Dante. The family of Camino was in power at Treviso. Whatever the disadvantages of despotism, its power to foster the temperament that made the Renaissance is undeniable. The courts of the tyrants expressed the highest note then attained in luxury and splendour. Poets, wits and men of learning entertained the great man's leisure. His banquets rivalled those of Lucullus, and as the new learning spread, profligate virtuosi often made deliberate efforts to imitate in their convivial gatherings the orgies of declining Rome. For if the New Age was a time of studious virtue, it was also a time when knowledge ministered to the refinement of vice, and in the courts not vicious, strange fantasies flourished and curious conceits. In the unstained House of the Della Scala, for example, hospitality was made more graceful by quaint devices of entertainment. The most distinguished head of the house, Can Grande, had men of eminence under his roof continually. Their apartments and tables were arranged strictly according to the guests' condition. Each had his own servant and his own table; the decorations of the suites of chambers were appropriate to their occupant—Triumph for Warriors, the Muses for Poets, Mercury for Artists, Scenes of Paradise for Theologians. During dinner there was music; buffoons and conjurers moved among the guests, showing their tricks and cracking their jokes. Still, as was to be expected, all this splendour did not always make for harmony. Dante himself is said to have had a notable passage at arms across the table, in which he vindicated his own opinion of himself as a poet and as a man. But the courts, no less than the academies, were a school of wits, a nursery of polite learning and of poetry. No matter how faction might rage without, the court of the Italian despot was a haven of rest for those who sought quiet to pursue the intellectual life, and it is thus that the age of the despots coincides with the period of greatest activity in the revival of intellectual life.

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI BLESSES THE BIRDS, BY GIOTTO

Photo Anderson

CHAPTER IV

THE ASCENT TO DANTE

FOR a clear century before the birth of Dante in 1265 it is possible to trace with certainty the operation of forces and influences prognostic of the Renaissance and contributory to the making of the Italian language and to Italy's greatest poet. Dante, it is true, stands outside the new movement; he is the last glorious landmark of the Middle Ages, but he is also an earnest of the future. For although he holds by ancient tradition and remains the most perfect expression of a dying epoch, his work was in its essence formative. It gave finality to the Italian language, it supplied the writers of the succeeding age with a rallying point. In it all that had been hitherto desultory and indeterminate found a focus: the Italian genius, groping towards fulfilment, had attained adequate and sublime expression. True, it was to develop along lines very different from those of the *Divine Comedy*, it was to formulate the thought of a new spirit, it was to declare itself the uncompromising antagonist of that older teaching to which Dante remained unswervingly loyal, but he had set up a great monument. If he dwelt on themes of faith that an age of sceptical intelligence would set little store by, he had at the same time achieved perfect beauty of form. This grave schoolman had given Italy a vehicle of poetic expression which not even the most brilliant of her Platonists could better. The most fleshly of the earlier Renaissance writers, Boccaccio himself, reverenced with filial affection the austere Dante; from a professor's chair he expounded the *Divine Comedy*, and it is to Boccaccio's pen that we owe our best portrait of the poet. And Boccaccio, writer of merry tales, stood near enough to the ages of faith to turn at last and rend the flesh he had formerly indulged. But for the advice of Petrarch he would have died a monk. The age is full of such paradoxes.

Even in the so-called Dark Ages, the light of imagination and

poetry was never wholly lost. The impulse that was to awaken a new poetry in Italy came not from within her own borders, but from France, which during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the epoch of the Crusades, of the rise of the Communes, the golden age of the Scholastic Philosophy, possessed two languages and two literatures. In the north, beyond the Loire, the *langue-d'oil* had become the vehicle for a great series of quasi-epics, the heroic tales of the Carlovingian and Arthurian cycles. In the south, Provence had produced her troubadours, whose medium was the *langue-d'oc*. With them the praise of Love and Chivalry had become a religion and a ritual. Enthusiastic coteries, vowed to the service of the ideal lady, composed songs framed on an elaborate method, with subtle and baffling laws of metre and rhyme; their Courts of Love, solemnly constituted to try causes of the heart and of conduct, condemned offenders to quaint and fantastic penalties. Two amorous transgressors might be sentenced to a period of separation. Attended by their judges, they must ride on mules to the point of parting; at every quarter of a mile the lover must address his lady in an impromptu stave, they must lean towards each other in the saddle, embrace tenderly, and so to the road again, while their companions, hiding the gentle mockery of the occasion beneath a manner of well-feigned seriousness, bore them company to the bitter end. In this spirit of veiled burlesque, childish and naïve, the trouvère coteries anticipated that delicate artificiality which the cultivated imagination of a later age was to carry to the point of fine art.

These two literatures entered Italy by different doors. The Arthurian romances took firm root on the soil of Lombardy, and the influence of the *langue-d'oil* moulded and exalted the rustic Italian to a new and quasi-literary form. Bologna used a purified Tuscan, in which French forms gave a fresh grace to speech and poetry. The Provençal songs and manner of the troubadours, on the other hand, supplied the inspiration of the singers who flourished at the Court of Frederick II. at Palermo. The Emperor himself and his secretary, Pietro della Vignea, set the fashion with their imitations of the gallant troubadour chanson, and about them grew up a host of minor singers, who used a dialect that was neither pure Sicilian nor pure Provençal, but a blending of both into a distinct dialect, the

Provençal-Sicilian. They were sensitive to the values of words, and led the way to that eclecticism of vocabulary which in the hands of Dante was afterwards to set a permanent literary fashion and impose canons upon the new-born Italian language. Symbolism is inseparable from such a movement towards preciosity, and it is possible that Frederick in his song of his 'Lady in Bondage' may have prefigured not merely a sentiment of mere human passion, but the struggle of his Empire against the Church. Yet the mere fact that such a meaning can possibly be read into the poem betrays the inherent weakness of this Sicilian school. It was an exotic that carried in its beautiful body the seeds of death. This passionate poetry, nurtured in the luxurious lap of the Hohenstaufen Court, was a thing purely artificial. It was no native song of Italy. With the downfall of Frederick and his son Manfred it withered and vanished. Yet it was not wholly lost, and it remained in its Tuscanised form a factor, by no means negligible, in the development of Italian literature towards its most perfect national expression in the *Divine Comedy*.

But even while this Aulic or Court poetry was still flourishing in Sicily, the movement towards a purely native Italian product had begun, and was ready to assert itself with increasing vigour. St. Francis, as we have seen, wrote religious lyrics in the speech of the common people. In that speech also he made his sermons. And in Tuscany had sprung up a home-born school, disdainful of the polished Court poetry, and jealous, too jealous, as Dante says (unless he is ironic), for the rights of Tuscan. These men, 'made senseless by their folly, arrogantly assume to themselves the title of a vernacular diction, more excellent than the rest; nor are the vulgar alone misled by this wild opinion, but many famous men have maintained it, as Guittone d'Arezzo, who never addicted himself to the polished style of the Court, Buonaggiunta of Lucca, Gallo of Pisa, Mino Mocato of Siena, and Brunetto of Florence, whose compositions . . . will be found to be not in the diction of the Court, but in that of their respective cities.'[1] It was not that the purest master of the Tuscan tongue was intolerant of vernacular poetry, but he knew with the assurance of genius that he and his immediate circle had achieved something greater than Guittone, the first who

[1] Dante, *De Vulgari Eloquio*, i. 13.

had striven to Tuscanise the Sicilian models. He makes Buonaggiunta confess[1] that he, together with the notary (Jacopone da Lentino) and Guittone, had fallen short of 'that new and sweeter style' which moved only at the bidding of inspiration. Dante is very jealous for the purity of his own art; these earlier singers were but ballad-mongers at the best.[2] In his own time he grants Guittone pre-eminence, but a better day has come. He puts his own criticism, however, in the mouth of another:

> 'Many of the elder time
> Cried up Guittone, giving him the prize,
> Till strength of numbers vanquished.'[3]

It is not in a Tuscan, but in the last-quoted speaker, a Bolognese poet, that Dante recognises his first great predecessor in Italian poetry. In the seventh circle of Purgatory he meets Guido Guinicelli, whose song 'Of the Gentle Heart' finds its echo and extension in the *Vita Nuova* and in the third canzone of the *Convito*. That cult, one might almost say that new religion of the *cuor gentil*, which is the motive of Dante's conception of ideal love, derives from Guido. The Florentine generously admits the debt. To him Guido was 'the wise man' upon whom he looked through the veil of cleansing fire with an emotion that held him dumb a while. Guido he hails as father to him and to all those 'his betters' who had ever used the sweet and pleasant rhymes of love. Guido, reading the later master's devotion, begs him to declare the cause:

> 'Those dulcet lays, I answered, which as long
> As of our tongue the beauty does not fade,
> Shall make us love the very ink that traced them.'

Therewith the poet of the gentle heart denies himself most chivalrously, and bids Dante honour rather the finest of the troubadours, Arnaut Daniel, supreme master of love ditties and the tales of prose. Guido ends with the request that if Dante should attain to Paradise, 'the cloister whereof Christ is Abbot of the college,' he should say one paternoster for him, and so he vanished through the fire, 'as a fish, diving, seeks the watery deep.'

[1] *Purgatorio*, xxiv. 55 (Cary's translation).
[2] *De Vulgari Eloquio*, ii. 6.
[3] *Purgatorio*, xxvi. 124 *seq.*

But while he is thus devoted to the memory of the Bolognese as a poet, for of the man he could have had little knowledge, seeing that Guido died when Dante was but eleven years old, the author of the *Divine Comedy* is loyal to the contemporary school of Florence whereof he is the chief. When he makes Buonaggiunta speak of that new and sweeter style wielded by those who stretch their plumes 'as the inditer guides them,' he has in mind not only himself, but Guido Cavalcanti, Lapo Gianni, Dino Angiolieri, and Cino dei Sinibaldi, better known as Cino da Pistoja, who, like Dante Alighieri, mourned a lost mistress. The burden of Cino and of Dante, 'Tears for my lady dead,' was the burden of the Greek Meleager, whom they knew not, and if we except the lament of Giacomino Pugliese, the Knight of Prato, who alone of their predecessors left a poem on a lady's death, they must be considered the inaugurators for the modern world of the passionate elegy that was soon to find yet another poignant voice in Petrarch. For Giacomino grief finds expression in a fierce upbraiding of death the pitiless; for Cino the death of Selvaggia had brought death within his own heart; for Dante it inspired first a like rebellion, and then, at the sight of his lady's humbleness in death, a strange humility in sorrow. Cino, chastened by finding death so near at hand, even in his own breast, is constrained to call it ease and peace; Dante, seeing his lady in such deep humility, calls death 'passing good henceforth, and a most gentle, sweet relief!'

> 'Since my dear love has chosen to dwell with thee,
> Pity, not hate, is thine, well understood.
> Lo, I do so desire to see thy face
> That I am like to one who nears the tomb.
> My soul entreats thee, "Come."'

And so his poetry takes the wings of allegorical vision, rising in a glorious crescendo, through all the lyrics of the *Vita Nuova*, until at length the lyrical form is no longer an adequate vehicle for his idealisation of the beloved dead. With the last sonnet of that mystical *Confessio Amantis* he presages the wonder and greater mysteries of the *Divine Comedy* itself. Of that transforming and uplifting process which drew Dante's genius towards its sublime achievement, the fittest explanation is his own.

'Beyond the sphere which spreads to widest space,
Now soars the sigh that my heart sends above:
A new perception born of grieving Love
Guideth it upward the untrodden ways.
When it hath reached unto the end, and stays,
It sees a lady round whom splendours move
In homage; till by the great light thereof
Abashed, the pilgrim spirit stands at gaze.
It sees her such, that when it tells me this
Which it hath seen, I understand it not,
It hath a speech so subtle and so fine.
And yet I know its voice within my thought,
Often remembereth me of Beatrice:
So that I understand it, ladies mine.'[1]

Even had Dante not seen fit to add the concluding prose passage of the *Vita Nuova*, this sonnet could not have missed its application. The 'new preception born of grieving Love' is the explanatory link between the more earthly passion of the *Vita Nuova* and the wholly purified vision to which Hell, Purgatory and Paradise stood at length revealed. It is the earnest of his spiritual reunion with the blessed Beatrice, 'round whom splendours move in homage.' And that later phrase, telling of speech so subtle and so fine, may bear a secondary meaning with reference to his merely literary achievement in the *Divine Comedy*. This point, if it be not too fanciful, is vital to our present inquiry. For the newer and sweeter style of the lyric group of Florence was carried by Dante in the *Vision* to a yet higher flight of fastidious poetic diction. While he chose as his medium that *lingua vulgaris* which was now the more polished *lingua Toscana*, called also by foreigners the *lingua Lombarda*, he imposed upon it certain rigid canons of selection until at length it emerged as his *lingua illustris*, upon which he set a seal so individual, so profoundly formative that he is justly proclaimed the father of modern Italian.

It had, as we have indicated, taken a century to arrive at Dante. The earliest known poet of Italy was the Sicilian, Ciullo d'Alcamo, who has left us a single famous canzone in lyrical dramatic form. Alcamo, from which Ciullo took his name, was an Arab settlement,

[1] That is the 'ladies that have intelligence in love' to whom the eleventh poem of the *Vita Nuova* is addressed. The translation is Rossetti's. Also the foregoing.

and in Ciullo's idiom can be traced Greek, Arabic and Norman elements. To some extent the poem may be an imitation of the Provençal, but Ciullo's probable date, 1112-78, puts him outside the circle of Frederick's Sicilian troubadours. Their contribution to the general development has been already indicated. It was for the most part negative, and it has been argued with reason that the extinction of the refined artificialities of Palermo was a benefit to Italian literature. Certainly in the hands of Dante's immediate circle it took new strength, it shed its exoticism, and became a true product of the national life. About 1280, when Dante was in his fifteenth year, the school of Brunetto Latini had achieved the evolution of the Italian language. This evolution involved no radical change; there is no 'old Italian' in the sense that there is an 'old French'; for thirteenth-century Italian is distinguished from the modern tongue only by some forms or expressions, mainly popular, and in no way by its grammatical structure. Yet until Dante came, the language, which on the extinction of the Sicilians had passed at one stroke to the position of a learned language, studied by men of letters, had not yet demonstrated its peculiar excellence for the complete expression of the national spirit. It was reserved for Dante to make that demonstration.[1]

[1] Gebhart, *Origines de la Renaissance*, pp. 168, 169, ed. 1879.

CHAPTER V

DANTE

THE last great figure of the Middle Ages—that is to say, the supreme genius who epitomised in his work all that was distinctive of the period during which human thought was held in the iron grasp of the Church, and who yet by virtue of his commanding gifts reached forward towards the age that was to follow—is without contest Dante Alighieri. He was, it was true, a man before his time, yet not in the accepted sense, for he was never a conscious rebel. 'Pity for the man,' says Schiller, 'who is at once a favourite and the slave of his own time.' Dante was neither, and yet by the strange paradox that pursued him through life, he was as a poet, at any rate, acceptable to the men of his own age. Amid all his political misfortunes and the disappointments that beset him as a lover and as a patriot, he had the supreme satisfaction of knowing that as a poet he had left an indelible mark upon the thought of his countrymen. Dante is a figure difficult to appreciate. In some respects we know a great deal about him, in others we are tantalisingly ignorant. Of the most intimate relations of his life he has himself left us the very poignant and beautiful confession. As regards his career we know the main outline, but there are strange gaps that no research will ever fill, and over the man himself there broods an almost uncanny silence. He is at one moment intimate, the next he is remote and almost repellent, tender and fierce by turns, always convinced without offence of his transcendent genius, and like the gods never for a moment in doubt. Scartazzini, his most minute and able editor, has ruthlessly discredited all the existing portraits of the seer of Hell, Purgatory and Paradise, but Dante remains for us distinct and convincing in the description of Boccaccio. He was a man of middle stature and of grave deportment, of a visage rather long, large eyes, an aquiline nose, dark complexion, large and prominent cheek-bones, black curling hair and beard, the under-lip projecting

beyond the upper. He dressed in red; his presence was majestic, remote and so awe-inspiring that the children pointed after him in the street, and whispered to each other, 'There goes the man who has been in hell.' For a time he yielded to the pleasures of the world, but never, one can believe, whole-heartedly, and here he betrays what is almost a regrettable defect in his character, for the passionate poems of the *Convito*, poems addressed not to Beatrice, and certainly not to Gemma Donati, seemed to him afterwards an incident so regrettable that he would fain have cut it out of his life. It was open to the poet of the heavenly love to have destroyed his more fleshly effusions, but probably it was just the poet in him that forbade him to take this course. He resorted to a subterfuge hardly admirable yet characteristic enough of the times. Educated in the tenets of the schoolmen, and himself, we have every reason to believe, the pupil at Paris of Thomas Aquinas, Dante had no difficulty in flying to philosophical subtlety for a solution of his dilemma. The poems seemed to him an everlasting indictment and memorial of a chapter in his life of which he was ashamed. He would not destroy them, he would explain them away, and so in the *Convito*, a dialogue written somewhat in the Platonic manner, he laboriously seeks to present the outpourings of a really mundane passion as the expression of a symbolic mystery.

Lest it be thought that we give too much prominence to such a minor incident in Dante's career, it may be as well to explain here that the point has been emphasised merely to show his curiously explicit kinship with the age that was to follow him. The austere prophet of an older school was not indifferent to that heightened feeling which was already anticipating the great revival, and which was before a century had elapsed to enable Italy, and especially Florence, to recapture a joy of life that was for the most part Pagan. The poems of the *Convito*, although less considerable than those of the *Vita Nuova*, are important in this, that they mark the free expression of the natural man Dante, who was to realise the best of his genius in another mood. It was in repression of the natural man that he was really to find himself and to raise to Beatrice and to himself an imperishable monument.

Born in the year 1265, Dante sprang from a noble Florentine house that traced its descent from Cacciaguida, who had fallen

fighting in the Crusades under the Emperor Conrad III. There is a very human touch of family pride in the way in which he introduces his great ancestor into the fifteenth canto of *Paradise*. Touches of humour in the *Divine Comedy* are somewhat hard to find, but it is not without a smile that we listen to Cacciaguida exclaiming as he greets his descendant:

> 'O, thou my blood,
> O most exceeding grace divine, to whom,
> As now to thee, hath twice the heavenly gate
> Been e'er unclosed.'

Later, too, there is another touch of this pride of descent where he hints at the armour-bearing family of the Alighieri, whose device was a wing *or* upon a field *azure*. It came into the family through the wife of Cacciaguida, who was of the Alighieri, and from this touch of reminiscence the ancestor now glorified in *Paradise* recalls how he was knighted by the Emperor Conrad himself. Although of noble descent, however, the Alighieri family were, up to the time of Dante's birth, professional men. His father was a notary of whom there is little record; he died when Dante was very young. The boy was brought up under Brunetto Latini, who trained him in the restricted scholarship of the time, and made him a competent Latinist. He afterwards studied at Padua, Bologna and Paris. There is a tradition that he was for a time at Oxford, but the authority upon which it rests is unfortunately too unsubstantial to give it even a moment of credence. At the age of twenty-four, Dante took part in the battle of Campaldino, where he fought on the Florentine side against the people of Arezzo, and later, in the war against Pisa, he was present at the surrender of Caprona. These operations gave him the material for two fine similes in the *Vision*. Before this time, however, he had already lived a lifetime in feeling. He was only nine when he saw Beatrice for the first time, and for sixteen years he loved her hopelessly. Strangely enough, his passion did not prevent him from contracting an unhappy marriage with Gemma Donati. He married her, it is said, on the earnest advice of his friends, who wished him to comfort himself for the irreparable loss. At the age of twenty-seven, he began to write the *Vita Nuova*, that marvellous

revelation of his hopeless worship of Beatrice. It culminated, as we have seen, in the inspiration suggested, it is said, by a vision which set him to the composition of his greatest work. With all his preoccupation he was still a man of affairs, and gradually rose to prominence as a citizen of Florence. In the fateful year 1300—the year in which he places his descent into hell—the year, too, of the first jubilee proclaimed by Pope Boniface VIII., he was elected one of the priors or chief magistrates of his native city. In a former chapter the dissensions which at that time tore Italy asunder have been outlined, and it is therefore unnecessary to treat with any detail the causes of the outbreak that led to Dante's ruin. The city, already rent by the strife of the Guelphs and Ghibellines, was now distracted by a further subdivision of the Guelph party into the Bianchi and the Neri. During Dante's priorship, an office which was changed every two months, and which he held with two colleagues from June to August, the Neri plotted to persuade Pope Boniface VIII. to send Charles of Valois to pacify and reform the city. The Bianchi discovered the plot, and requested the prior to punish their opponents, who, they said, had conspired to expel them from the city. Dante expelled the leaders of both factions, but his action led to an accusation of favouritism. It was said that he had been more lenient towards the Bianchi than to the Neri. Shortly afterwards he undertook an embassy to the Pope, and during his absence his townsmen pronounced a decree of banishment against him, charged him with peculation, and confiscated his property. He left Florence, never to return.

For the rest of his life he was a wanderer and an exile at foreign courts, longing always to return to Florence, but always forbidden by Fate. Once indeed he organised a conspiracy to recapture the city, but the forces he had raised were defeated under the walls of Florence, and had to retire after having been in possession of one of the gates. He was entertained at Padua and Verona, where he was the guest of the Della Scala, and from time to time he still dreamed of restoration. He wrote his passionate epistle to the Florentines beginning, 'My people, what have I done unto you?' and at one time there was a movement for reinstatement, but the price was a humiliating public penance, to which he could not submit, and finally he ceased to make any efforts to be recalled to the

city of the Lily. He had one gleam of hope when Henry of Luxembourg was elected to the imperial throne. In him Dante saw hope not only of his own restoration, but the restoration of all Italy. By this time he was an avowed Ghibelline, and he trusted that the Emperor would overthrow the power of the Pope. His political philosophy was rooted in veneration for the ancient Roman Empire, and in his treatise *De Monarchia* he sees in the Holy Roman Empire the embodiment of the ideal system of government. But Henry's expedition into Italy was brief and ill-fated. With his death Dante saw the extinction of every worldly hope he possessed.

Of the bitterness of his banishment he speaks in the *Convito*. 'It was the pleasure of the citizens of that fairest and most renowned daughter of Rome, Florence, to cast me forth out of her sweet bosom in which I had my birth and nourishment even to the ripeness of my age, and in which with her good-will I desire with all my heart to rest this weary spirit of mine and to terminate the time allotted to me on earth. Wandering over almost every part to which this our language extends, I have gone about like a mendicant, showing against my will the wound with which Fortune has smitten me, and which is often imputed to the ill-deserving of him on whom it is inflicted. I have indeed been a vessel without sail and without steerage, carried about to divers ports and roads and shores by the dry wind which springs out of sad poverty, and have appeared before the eyes of many who perhaps from some report that has reached them had imagined me of a different form, in whose sight not only was my person disparaged, but every action of mine became of less value. Alack for things done, and for things yet to be attempted!'

Yet his misery was not entirely without compensations. He had by his Italian writings already made an extraordinary appeal to his countrymen. He had given a new impulse to the vernacular, he had fixed for all time the literary language of Italy. Recognition had come to him in full measure, and had, he confesses in *De Vulgari Eloquio*, almost reconciled him to his misfortunes. He found his last refuge with Guido Novello at Ravenna, where at any rate he was treated with no lack of honour.

His patron sent him on an embassy to Venice, but the mission did not turn out as Dante hoped, and his pride was wounded by what

he believed to be a diplomatic defeat. So terribly did he take this to heart that on his return to Ravenna he sickened and died in July 1321. Minute inquiries into the circumstances of Dante's career and detailed criticism of his work lie outside the scope of the present inquiry, which is concerned rather with the points at which the poet and his poetry may be considered to touch the age of the Renaissance. Of that time, speaking proleptically, the *Divine Comedy* is also a flower. If we forget the dogma, the wire-drawn metaphysics, the desolating thought which pervades this strange conception, the horrible tortures of the *Inferno*, and the all too vivid splendours of the *Paradise*, if we fix our attention solely on the soul of Dante and the genius of the poet, we shall be forced to the conclusion that Italy has not known a greater artist. His pictures have just that moving accent which for a long period distinguish Italian painting. In him the pathetic touch of Giotto and of Fra Angelico is raised to the highest power. No political strife, no terrors of an ineffable Vision, no rigidity of faith, could alter in him the delicacy of heart, the pity, the tenderness, the exquisite sadness that breathe through his work. In that tenderness of heart is summed up the whole matter. If not the first poet who avowedly sang the praises of the gentle heart (for Guido Guinicelli, his forerunner, had already made this manifestation of a new spirit known to men), Dante, at any rate, developed and extended it, making it musical with his *dolce stil nuovo* until its expression touched the highest note in poetry. Of his place at the confluence of two ages no finer figure has been found than that which likens him to a pilgrim who hears at evening the bell that seems to mourn the dying day. He weeps with the lost in the realm of the eternal sorrow, he recites their words, he respects their misery, he flatters their pride, he is affected by the unmerited evils which they have suffered while on earth. Francesca's woe touches him to tears; his friend and fellow-poet, Guido Cavalcanti, thinking only of his son, and believing that he is dead, falls back speechless into his flaming tomb. These and other passages recall the pictorial art of Dante's time, and set him also among the earlier painters. While he has their emotion, in imagination he has far surpassed them, and there he remains supreme.[1]

[1] See Gebhart, *op. cit.*

Through the matchless cadences of the *Divine Comedy* there moves an incommunicable emotion that, while it is picturesque, yet transcends any canvas by the multitude of feelings it evokes, for there is a sense of movement and of atmosphere, of being surrounded, as it were, by the persons and scenes of the drama which no picture can ever convey. The attitude of the spectator who looks at a great picture or a great sculpture remains external. He may, it is true, become lost in the subject, but he is conscious of a certain fixity, he is never swept onwards as is the spectator at a play. In the *Divine Comedy* we recognise at length three distinctive notes, as it were, underlying the three divisions of the subject, and there is a sense of dominant sound. In the *Inferno* we are tortured by the continual wailing, shrieks and groans; there is a terrible sense of unrest, of the onward and tumultuous surging of souls, which has in these later days been most perfectly expressed by Tchaikovski in the groundwork of the orchestration of his symphonic fantasia, *Francesca da Rimini*. The two doomed lovers are borne onwards upon a tide of the eternally lost.

> 'Bellowing there groaned
> A noise, as of a sea in tempest torn
> By warring winds. The stormy blast of hell
> With restless fury drives the spirits on,
> Whirl'd round and lashed amain with sore annoy.
> When they arrive before the ruinous sweep
> There shrieks are heard, there lamentations, moans,
> And blasphemies 'gainst the good Power in heaven.'

They pass like cranes wailing their dolorous notes, stretched out in long array, and ever and anon one is disentangled from the flux to chant his or her doom and pass. It is the utter negation of all peace. From this welter the reader has hardly passed into the *Purgatorio* before he is sensible of a sharp yet exquisite contrast. The whole atmosphere of the poem has changed, and although the inhabitants of the second realm have not yet attained to perfect bliss, they are yet the prisoners of hope. The serene air is full of music, the narrative is punctuated with songs of praise, interwoven with such art, such perfect harmony with the theme, that the very sound of singing can be caught. For the most part the snatches of song are from the lauds and canticles of the Church, and the

familiarity of these to the hearer in the ages of faith, who must have connected them inevitably with traditional melody, must have lent to the *Purgatory* the effect of what we can only express by likening it to opera. At the opening of the eleventh canto, by a most daring stroke, the spirits chant a wonderful paraphrase of the *Pater Noster*, and that although they moved beneath a weight such as men feel in dreams, yet

> 'purging as they went
> The world's gross darkness off.'

And as the harmonic intensity of the *Purgatorio* rises, the reader's mind is prepared for the Vision to which all that preceded has been leading up; the appearance of Beatrice herself, who has come down to the Middle Region to relieve Virgil of his task and herself conduct Dante into Paradise. The whole Mount of Purgatory palpitates with joy at her appearance, the terrors of the Inferno fade, and Dante moves towards the highest region, regenerate 'Even as plants adorned with foliage new, pure and made apt for mounting to the stars.' Again in the *Paradise*, the supreme artist floods his fresh picture with yet another atmosphere. The impression is less that of music than of a glory transcending sense. The opening word indeed is joy, and the redeemed spirits move continually in their circles like points of light, not restlessly like the doomed in the *Inferno*, but with a majesty akin to that of the motion of the spheres in the opening lines of the prologue to *Faust*.

In the *Paradise* Dante's inveterate fondness for metaphysical discussion betrays him into passages where the reader is strained, and has to rally all his attention, and thus it is perhaps that the *Purgatory* remains the best-loved part of the poem. But it was of set purpose that Dante taxed his reader's attention. He had seen things transcending speech, and with a touch of something like arrogance he determines to make his speech mystical and even obscure. At length he admits that the vision surpassed even his powers of expression; when at length the Universal Form was revealed to him, he could only gaze in wonder, and recognise that never again willingly can one who has looked upon the like turn his eyes elsewhere. He rises to his tremendous apostrophe of the Eternal Light, in which he overwhelms his readers with the sense of

radiance; he hints at further mysteries revealed, but the flight was not for his wing—the wing of the Alighieri, gold on an azure field. No doubt that symbol was in his thought even at the supreme moment, but even the genius of Dante confesses itself at its last limit.

> 'Here vigour failed the towering phantasy,
> But yet the will rolled onward like a wheel,
> In even motion by the love compelled,
> That moves the sun in heaven and all the stars.'

It may be suggested to those who have time to engage upon it as a pleasant speculation, that they should trace the crescendo in each of the three parts of the *Divine Comedy*, and then the crescendo of the whole. It is sufficiently significant of Dante's intention that each part ends with a reference to the stars—'stars,' indeed, is the last word in the last canto of each of the three divisions. Looking back upon the whole the prevailing impression of the first is of restless misery and dolorous sound; of the second a serene progress to ordered notes of music; and of the third transcendent light, growing in intensity until sense can endure it no longer. The ineffable vision is suggested rather than expressed at the supreme moment.

Such was the extraordinary legacy which Dante bequeathed to his country and to the world. Had he left only the *Vita Nuova* and the *Convito* he would still have ranked among the greatest love-singers of all times, and he would still have been the master of Petrarch, but when he wrote at the outset of the former work 'incipit *Vita Nuova*' he builded greater than he knew. For the exquisite love-poetry of that chronicle and confession was to lead him, as he wrote its closing lines, to the vision of a greater poem, in which he was to celebrate his lady as no woman had been celebrated before. 'It is my hope that I shall yet write concerning her what hath not heretofore been written in any book.'

Incipit Vita Nuova! There began the new life not only for Dante, but for the Italian genius; through the passionate canzoni of his own love-story, with their gradual spiritualising of what was at first an earthly love, up to the tremendous and stately conception of the great *Vision*, Dante was setting in motion a force that was to carry new life to his contemporaries and successors.

PORTRAIT OF DANTE, BY GIOTTO

National Museum, Florence

Photo Alinari

He had lifted poetry above the graceful trifling of the Provençal School, of which the passion was at the best artificial. He had dignified and exalted the Tuscan tongue, so that men found in it a perfect instrument for the thought and the poetry of the succeeding age. Yet how narrow was the escape. The first few lines of the *Inferno* were actually written in Latin, for Dante, in spite of his belief in his native tongue, was yet the child of his age, and could not escape the prejudice that gave the palm to Latin as the most dignified means of expression. He knew that by using Latin he would have been better understood beyond the bounds of Italy, but he felt that while his sense might have been communicated, the beauty of his poetic form would have been lost. It is curious to remark in connection with another part of our subject that Dante, who created Italian style, and who was a purist even to preciosity, was thoroughly mediæval in his Latin scholarship. As yet the sense of classical style lay in the sleep of the Dark Ages. It was for one whom Dante inspired as a native Italian singer to recover that lost sense of the beauty, the merely verbal beauty, of the poets of ancient Rome. Francesco Petrarch carried the passionate lyric almost to the same height as Dante, but the lyric would not have made the Renaissance. Side by side with the upgrowth of a native Italian poetry arose that revival of classical learning which we know as Humanism. Of that the founder was Petrarch, the inspired singer of Laura in perfect Italian verse, and at the same time the uninspired writer of an elegant Latin epic, upon which he founded his fame, though posterity has forgotten it. The Humanist was needful to the Renaissance, but he was not all the Renaissance. His work, important as were its results in the development of a new spirit, blossomed and withered within a single century. Of its first beginnings in Petrarch we have now to speak.

CHAPTER VI

FROM DANTE TO PETRARCH

THROUGHOUT the period covered by the life of Dante (1265-1321) a new consciousness had been awakening in the soul of Italy. It must not be held to be rigidly contemporaneous with the life of her greatest poet, but his epoch is a convenient point of reference, and his own contribution to literature, as well as his attitude of mind, illustrate, with certain restrictions, yet sufficiently, the direction of the new tendency. Two main considerations fall to be noted with reference to the subsequent development of Italian thought and Italian literature: the one is the quickening of the memory, never wholly dead, of ancient Rome and her institutions; the other is the growing inclination of writers to infuse into the composition of Latin something of classical elegance. Side by side with this reviving consciousness of antiquity we find some contempt of Italian as a literary vehicle, but by good fortune Dante, after beginning his *Divine Comedy* in Latin hexameters, abandoned that medium for the vernacular, altered and exalted by his own fastidious sense; while by equal good fortune Petrarch wrote in Italian those passionate sonnets in praise of Laura which have secured his fame in the second place after the great Florentine master. As regards the other tendency, the feeling for ancient Rome, we shall see that consciousness developed in Petrarch to a far higher degree than it was in Dante, though in a political sense it was perhaps less keen. Dante had no sense of Latin literary style such as was rediscovered in Petrarch, but his reverence for ancient Rome as the perfect, the divinely appointed[1] guardian of civilisation was, although based upon more slender knowledge, a vital conviction on which he founded his *De Monarchia*.

From Dante, Petrarch, as the poet of love, is immediately descended. From Dante he caught the inspiration that has kept

[1] *De Monarchia*, ii. Also Burckhardt, chap. viii

his fame alive as a poet. Yet his inspiration was of the second order. His poetry, however passionate and human, never touches the sublime. Without calling in question his sincerity, it is possible to say that he was always the man of letters, conscious of literary effort. He is no mystic, interpreting as best he may things unspeakable; no overwhelming vision was vouchsafed him; yet it was given to him to carry Italian poetry one stage further towards the modern spirit. Petrarch's verse is the first great expression of an individuality. In the *Divine Comedy* there are few reflections of the poet's mind. Absorbed in his imperial theme, Dante remains the mouthpiece of his inspiration, which sometimes, he confesses, is too great for him.[1] Petrarch, on the other hand, is always equal to his task. He does not grudge toil, but in the end he conquers. 'He had chiselled those little poems rather in the spirit of a witty Italian than of a tortured lover. Doubtless he had suffered a little, but it gave him no trouble to express his pain harmoniously, to adorn his solitude with the memory and the image of Laura.'[2] Yet, even with this slight discount, which would not be apparent were it not for the comparison with the sublime and detached passion of Dante, Petrarch's contribution to Italian letters is of the very noblest. It stands midway between the great monument of the *Divine Comedy* and that later development of native poetry which followed the extinction of Humanism in Italy.

Here, again, we note a paradox. For Petrarch, the father of modern poetry, was also the father of that fuller realisation of Antiquity which we call Humanism. Without him Italian poetry would not have found its ultimate expression; equally without him the classical revival might never have been accomplished. But these two things—Humanism and native Italian poetry—were inimical. For more than a century after Petrarch the one held the other in check. The Humanists contemned the Italian tongue and neglected it for their imitative Latinity. On the latter, curiously enough, Petrarch staked his reputation, but the judgment of time reversed the poets. His Humanism, while it started a great work for Europe, had in it the seeds of death as far as Italian culture was concerned. With its extinction Italian men of letters returned

[1] *Paradise*, xxxiii. 55.

[2] Gebhart, *Les Origines de la Rénaissance*, p. 312.

with new vigour to their own language. In the time of Leo x. 'Florence, always foremost in the van of culture, had shaken off the traditions of strict Humanism. Her greatest writers—Guicciardini, Macchiavelli, Varchi, Segni and Giannotti—exchanged the Latin language for their mother speech, and sought for honour in fields far removed from verbal scholarship, or Ciceronian niceties of phrase.'[1]

In Petrarch's own account of his birth, which took place at Arezzo on the 20th of July 1304, there occurs a phrase that is symbolical of his mission as the first great exponent of the new awakening. 'I was born,' he says, 'just as the dawn began to brighten.' He refers to a physical fact, but his words have for us a symbolical significance. In this boy, the son of a political exile from Florence, the scion of a noble family long honoured as jurists in the city of the Lily, all those half-conscious forces which were stirring in the Italian mind were to become articulate. He was to develop a passion for the scholarship of antiquity stronger than any of his contemporaries had displayed, and that together with his native poetic genius was to exercise a twofold influence on Italian thought and Italian letters. Francesco Petrarch was to be at once the founder of the new learning and the first great poet of the Renaissance. He was to rediscover and communicate the appreciation of style in the classical Latin writers; he was, in a sense denied to Dante, to bequeath to his successors a body of Italian poetry that would convince Italians of the possibilities contained in their own language as a means of literary expression. Dante, for all his sublime artistry, is not of the new age. He remains the dogmatist, the mystic, the lover certainly, but the lover transcendentalised. Petrarch is the singer of earthly passion that for him needs no apology. Dante, as we have seen, had also his moment of unspiritualised emotion, which he expressed in burning verse, but he sought to explain it away in the philosophic allegories of the *Convito*. The old order held him in too firm a grasp for him to acquiesce without *arrière pensée* in the mere joy of life, the dawn of which was now beginning to brighten. He is the singer of a time that was passing away. Petrarch came to meet the dawn with glad and open eyes. He was to lead it towards the perfect day.

[1] Symonds, *The Renaissance*, vol. ii. p. 426, ed. 1882.

Such were these two, considered as Italian poets. As scholars they stand wider apart, if indeed any comparison be possible. For in Dante scholarship, in the Petrarchan sense, was not. Scholastic philosophy and scholastic Latin were all his equipment. Great as was his reverence for Virgil, it was founded on subject-matter alone. Of the purely literary beauties of his guide and teacher he can have realised little or nothing. His own Latin style is harsh and unadorned. It is the Latin of his age, the serviceable means of communication between learned men who took no thought for language as an end in itself. We shall see how a new understanding, a new feeling for mere style, arose with Petrarch, and through him inspired those Humanists who restored to Europe full knowledge of the great writers of Greece and Rome. But at the same time, while Dante was denied this literary sense as far as Latin is concerned (he had it abundantly enough for Italian), it must not be forgotten that he held the idea of ancient Rome in the deepest reverence. Nor was he alone in this sentiment. In Italy, unlike the rest of Europe, the classical tradition, although obscured, had never been wholly lost. The relics of paganism, the broken monuments of Rome's former splendour, spoke mysteriously all through the Middle Ages to the heart of the people. At the end of the sixth century Virgil was solemnly recited in the Forum of Trajan; the poetic laurel was from time to time awarded on the Capitol. The Romans rejoiced when Theodoric restored the buildings and statues of the imperial city. Gregory the Great, no friend to paganism, could yet exclaim: 'Rome, once mistress of the world, in what case does she find herself to-day? Where is the senate, where the people? Her very buildings are falling and her walls crumble at all points.'[1] The apostolic city became the home of strange legends, the popular religion was entwined with pagan superstitions. The very ruins of Rome gave birth to curious fables. Men still believed in the Sibyls, whom they regarded as prophetesses of the Messiah, Virgil was at once a Messianic seer and a necromancer; his poetic fame was overshadowed by his mastery of magic; in the twelfth century the Carmina Burana, the songs of the wandering scholars, with their joyous humour, their delicate echoes of classical mythology, their unashamed naturalism, are already a foretaste of the

[1] Gebhart, *Les Origines de la Renaissance*, p. 123.

Renaissance. And while those vagrant students could be as airily ribald as Pulci or Lorenzo the Magnificent (when he was not writing hymns), some of them could also compose Latin poetry that recalls in its music and its grace the true Virgilian manner.

Yet these stray survivals of style are of secondary importance. What was vital to the Italy of the Middle Ages was her lingering veneration for the glory of Rome as a state, as the sovereign state of the world. It remained a deep-rooted popular sentiment, that finds literary expression in the *Divine Comedy* and the *De Monarchia* of Dante. But in Dante it remains a relic of a bygone time; he broke no new ground; by independent study he came to no fresh realisation of classical antiquity. That task was reserved for the genius of Petrarch.

His sympathy with the great Latin masters must have been a gift inborn, but the accidents of his upbringing brought the boy under the very influences he required to mould him into the first of the Humanists. When he was eight years old, his father, Ser Petracco, moved from Arezzo to Pisa to meet the Emperor Henry VII. In Pisa he saw for the first time an affluent and artistic Italian city, where the master chisel of Nicholas the Pisan had, half a century earlier, revived the true spirit of ancient sculpture. A year later, on the fall of Henry, Ser Petracco left Italy with his little son for Avignon, now the refuge of the Papacy. They journeyed on foot to Genoa, and the experiences of their pleasant wayfaring left an indelible impression on the poet's mind, to be remembered in late manhood as 'a lovely dream.' At Genoa he met another boy, also the son of a refugee, who was to be his companion at the grammar school of Carpentras. To this friend, Guido Settimo, who had become Archbishop of Genoa, he wrote fifty years later that memorable letter in which he recalls their happy schooldays, when undisturbed by any storm of trouble, he drank in 'as far as his poor wit allowed,' the sweet milk of boyish learning, to strengthen his mind for the digesting of more solid nourishment.[1]

The young Francesco and Guido were sent to school under Convennole of Prato, one of the most celebrated teachers of his time. This pedagogue was a 'character,' who for sixty years toiled to make good Latinists, and never had a penny of solid profit

[1] *Senile Epistles.*

therefrom to comfort him in his old age. His only reward was the eminence to which many of his pupils attained. Chief of them all he loved Petrarch, who never forgot his old master. His generosity brought the poet one of the greatest losses of his life. For one day, when he had long outgrown the bonds of pupilage and had begun that assiduous collecting of Latin manuscripts which was to bear such memorable fruit for European learning, Petrarch lent old Convennole his unique copies of Cicero's *De Gloria* and *The Laws* in order that he might have them at hand to help him in one of his everlasting schemes of literary futility. For Convennole was always planning immortal works that came to nothing. 'Poverty that persuades to evil' had the pedagogue on the hip. Bread was awanting, and Convennole pawned the precious MSS. Long delay at last drew a confession from the shamefaced schoolmaster. Petrarch was quite willing to redeem his books, but Convennole pleaded to be allowed to do so himself in time. He would not even tell the pawnbroker's name. His death prevented redemption, and Petrarch never saw his precious MSS. again. Of *The Laws* other copies existed, but the *De Gloria* was unique. Since that day it has been mourned among the lost books of the world.

Cicero was to Petrarch a passion. Even at school he had begun to love the works of the orator. This affection he owed in a great measure to his father, who would, according to his son, have been distinguished as a scholar had he not been hampered by the necessity of providing for his family. We may acquit the young Francesco of priggish precocity in spite of the complacency with which he says that 'at the age when others are gaping over Prosper and Æsop, I buckled to the books of Cicero'; for he confesses in almost the next sentence that at the time he could not understand what he read, but the sweetness of the language and the majesty of the cadences so enchanted him that whatever else he read or heard sounded harsh in his ears and quite discordant.

The confession is important, even epoch-making. It is an avowal of the awakening to that sense of language for its own sake which is distinctive of the revival of learning. A further understanding, a nicer interpretation of subject-matter was to be equally in the gift of the new spirit, but from henceforth men were to be no longer blind and deaf to the mere literary graces of an ancient author.

How he said a thing was to have equal importance with what he said. Petrarch's admission marks a sharp cleavage with the Middle Ages. It is the first manifestation of an attitude at once recovered from classical antiquity and anticipative of modernity. Nothing could be further removed from the scholastic temper, to which dogma was everything, than this delight in the mere sound of words as yet unintelligible. The æsthetic sense, long slumbering, had awakened in young Petrarch.

For a time Ser Petracco looked indulgently upon his son's enthusiasm for Cicero, and even fostered Francesco's growing literary style, but the hard hand of practical necessity intervened. The notary had had losses; his son must now, at sixteen, think about the serious business of life. He must begin to bring grist to the family mill. That meant inevitably the study and ultimately the practice of the law, so the future poet was packed off to Montpellier. Ser Petracco's advice was to 'forget Cicero, and study the laws of borrowing and lending, of wills and their codicils, of property in land and property in houses.' But Francesco's natural bent was too strong. Ser Petracco was, it is true, sufficiently in advance of his time to understand the purely literary turn of mind, but he could not suffer it to interfere with practical ends. As usual with men of his type, he went too far. Discovering that Francesco had made a little secret store of all the works of Cicero that he could collect, he threw the precious MSS. into the fire. Petrarch howled dismally, as dismally, he says, as if he himself had been thrown upon the logs, and Ser Petracco was so far touched as to rescue a Virgil and Cicero's *Rhetoric* from the flames. These he offered to Francesco's tears. 'Keep the one for an occasional hour of recreation; the other as a stimulus to your study of civil law.'

For seven years Petrarch did his best to please his father. He enjoyed his student life, if not his studies, at Montpellier. At the age of nineteen he entered the University of Bologna, which he also found a pleasant place. But the Humanist-to-be rebelled against the methods of the schools. Once more he sounds a note of revolt against the Scholasticism of the Middle Ages, and we get a still clearer view of the coming Petrarch, the first modern man. Philosophy he sees degraded to mere hairsplitting on subtle distinctions and verbal quibbles; the reality of things is despised—people

concentrate their whole attention on empty phrases. This attention to mere words must not be confused with Petrarch's enthusiasm for the verbal music of Cicero. It was merely wrangling about meanings. The Church had circumscribed the range of philosophy. Thinkers dared not attempt liberal speculation. All they could do was to rear airy superstructures, to dispute on such barren themes as the question: 'How many angels can dance on the point of a needle?' To such futilities the burning genius of Petrarch had nothing to say. Equally tedious and unfruitful he found those legal studies to which filial piety kept him faithful until his father's death in 1326 released him from a hated bondage. Dishonest executors robbed him of any inheritance. Out of his father's estate, which was considerable, Petrarch received only the beautiful copy of the *De Gloria*, which poor old Convennole pawned, and lost.

Thrown thus entirely on his own resources, Petrarch determined to be a poet and a scholar. He must have learned enough law to make a living had he cared to practise, but that course was quite repugnant. One other profession lay open to him, the Church. Without vocation, and purely as a means of livelihood, he took minor orders, which involved no separation from the world. While awaiting preferment at Avignon, he played the part of the young man about town to perfection, and was, by his own confession, a very thoroughgoing exquisite. At the Papal Court he met artists and men of letters, and, for all his gaiety, kept his scholarly and poetical ideals conscientiously in view. How he lived at this time does not exactly appear, but he had means enough to dress fastidiously and to be a refined man of pleasure, who was quoted as a model of elegance by fashionable Avignon. As yet his genius had received no mastering inspiration. But when he had been trifling for just a year in the dissolute Provençal city, which the exiled Roman Episcopate had nicknamed the Babylon of her captivity, he encountered, unawares, the supreme experience of his life.

It was on the 6th of April 1327, in the Church of St. Claire at Avignon, that he first saw the lady for whom he conceived that hopeless passion which has given him immortality. Love seized him as suddenly and as completely as it had seized the young Dante at his first sight of Beatrice. For both poets a romantic mystery clings about their supreme emotion, and some have even suggested

that the object of their worship was no real woman, but a phantasy of ideal love. In Petrarch's case the mystery is heightened by the impossibility of identifying Laura. She has been supposed to typify the laurel crown of poetry; but it is hard to believe that such verse as those sonnets that 'gave ease to Petrarch's wound' were inspired by a mere abstraction. The poet was a man of flesh and blood, who could love after a very earthly fashion, despite his priestly profession, and although Laura remained for ever remote, he worshipped her with the fierce ardour of human desire. Whether she was Laura de Noves, Countess of Sade, or no matters but little. Exact knowledge could only satisfy a curiosity that often takes small care of what is essential. It is sufficient that we possess Petrarch's imperishable monument to his unattainable mistress, with its revelation of the man and of the poet. The devout servant of antiquity, the enthusiast of old Rome, the delicate appreciator of Latin prose and Latin verse, the founder of critical scholarship, is a person of limited appeal. He inspired his contemporaries and successors to achievements most vital and noteworthy in furthering the new intellectual movement, but these services are remembered only by specialists. It is as Laura's lover that he lives in the affectionate remembrance of mankind.

Petrarch knew, with the inevitable assurance of the man of genius, that his vernacular poetry was a thing of worth. But the bias of his age led him to put it in the second place. He could not escape something of the pedant's temper. He was in love with Latin, in which he had rediscovered forgotten beauties; and therefore he awarded his Latin compositions the higher place. Anything written in the vulgar tongue was less worthy of the dignity of the professed scholar. With what seems to us a curious perversity, yet to him most natural, he aspired to epic rank, and laboured for half a lifetime to produce the heroic poem, already referred to, which he hoped to set beside the *Aeneid*. He chose the exploits of Scipio Africanus, and elaborated it with skill and unwearied industry, but he could not make the dry bones live. The dead hand lay upon his work. Here and there he composed sonorous or graceful lines, here and there he achieved a melodious or picturesque passage, but who to-day can read his *Africa* with any patience? Petrarch's epic lies among forgotten things; worse irony still, among things not worth remembering.

Death has claimed the *Africa*, not because it was a thing of slavish imitation and empty echoes, such as are even the best college exercises of to-day. Petrarch strove whole-heartedly to write in an original vein. He took no individual Roman poet as his model, he was impatient of borrowed phrases. Very deep was his disgust and annoyance when it was pointed out to him that he had unconsciously written a line which can be exactly paralleled in Virgil. He had believed that it was his own invention. The trouble with the *Africa* was that its very conception was artificial. Petrarch was sincere enough in his enthusiasm for the dead glories of Rome, which he sought to interpret and commend to his own age, but her epic had already been found and sung for all time. There could be no second. Nor can epic be achieved by a mere transcription of history. The theme must be heightened by the supernatural, and this must be introduced with sufficient art to make it one with the story. The *Africa* too plainly shows that the epic form has been foisted upon it. The poem is a failure, but in justice to Petrarch's literary sense we must note that while he staked his reputation upon it, he was not without serious misgivings as to the future of the work. He knew well enough how great was the risk of ranking himself with Virgil. Yet he hoped; and although the *Africa* was never formally given to the world, it was known, in part at least, by his contemporaries, who encouraged him with their praise.

That poem, begun in a moment of inspiration during his first sojourn at Vaucluse, whither he had fled in 1338 from the follies and painful associations of Avignon, was still unfinished when Petrarch received what was the most signal tribute to his glory as a poet. He had long desired to obtain, from the hands of the Roman Senate, the Laurel Crown of Song, which Dante had coveted in vain. That honour was formally offered to him on 1st September 1340. On the same day Paris made him a like proposal. The Roman offer had precedence by a few hours: it arrived at nine o'clock, that from Paris at four. In his dilemma Petrarch applied to his friend, Cardinal Colonna, with whom he used to spend delightful hours on the roof of the baths of Caracalla, discussing the vanished grandeurs of the Eternal City, that passion of the Renaissance, which, as we have already noted, Dante also shared. Veneration for antiquity,

Petrarch confesses to Colonna, inclined him towards the Roman offer. He balances it against the novelty of Paris. Patriotic feeling he sets against his friendship for Robert, Chancellor of the University of Paris. A further consideration in favour of Rome was the fact that it was in the dominion of Robert of Sicily, whom of all men Petrarch accounted fittest to judge of his merits. This fitness he put to a practical test; for when Cardinal Colonna decided him in favour of being crowned at Rome, Petrarch journeyed thither by way of Naples, and submitted himself to the king for examination, as though he had been a young candidate for academic honours. There is something curiously whimsical and yet typical of the temper of the times in the scene of that probation. Petrarch reached Naples in March 1341, and stayed a month at Robert's court. In full hall, before the court, the king examined the poet on the whole range of human learning. The test lasted two days and a half. Petrarch came off with flying colours. The monarch would fain have conferred the poetic laurel at once with his own hand. But Petrarch would not disappoint the Romans. He went on his way rejoicing. Robert would have accompanied his guest to the scene of his supreme triumph, but the weight of years forbade the journey.

The ceremony in the Capitol gave Petrarch the most thrilling and impressive moment of his life. The occasion was remarkable, for the laurel crown had not been publicly bestowed for centuries. The crowning was the first official recognition of that reviving enthusiasm for letters which had now become conscious and articulate in the Italian people. It marks the formal recognition for the moderns of the literary man as a world-force, the equal of kings and princes. The poet went to his coronation clad in King Robert's own purple robe. Rome was *en fête*. It was Easter Sunday. The city rang with the blare of trumpets, announcing that on that morning Rome was to do honour to the triumph of a peaceful conqueror whose only weapon was the pen. The first of the Humanists was very human; he had the pride which no great poet has escaped. He was gratified, and he had reason. In the meagre details of that gentle triumph we catch some forecast of that pageantry in which the later Renaissance was to prove itself so complete a master. Crowds of citizens assembled to watch the

procession that, led by twelve noble youths and six notables, crowned with flowers and dressed in green, escorted Petrarch to his coronation. The civic dignitaries followed the poet up the Capitoline Hill, and the ritual began.

True to his sense of classical antiquity and in loyalty to his Mantuan master, Petrarch gave out a line of Virgil as his text, and discoursed on the poet's craft and calling. He ended with a formal petition for the laurel, which he received kneeling from the senator, Orso Colonna. Then he recited a sonnet, now lost, celebrating the heroes of ancient Rome. The proceedings in the Capitol ended with a panegyric from Stefano Colonna—the old man eloquent. Then, following the coronation ritual of temporal kings, Petrarch went to St. Peter's and offered his crown at the altar, thus symbolising the spirit, *Non nobis Domine*, in which he had received the honour. At the banquet which ended the day, Orso Colonna, the retiring senator of the year, presented a diploma, in its terms very similar to the academic diplomas still granted to graduates of Scottish universities, modelled on the system of Paris. The deed, after recognising the laureate's pre-eminence in poetry and history, authorised him to teach, dispute and publish. The city as such, however, claimed a place in the document, which ended by conferring on Petrarch the freedom of Rome.

It must be remembered, however, that significant as this solemn act of recognition may have been, it represented only a tendency. The enlightened minds who had arranged this honour for Petrarch still thought of him first as an Italian poet. He had yet a long way to go as a promoter of what Erasmus at a later date was to call 'good learning,' in the excellent sense of that phrase. But Petrarch the scholar was not so much left out of account in the Capitol ceremony as some have contended. The examination before King Robert, the poet's inaugural address, his sonnet and the terms of his diploma, all belong to the revival of learning, a movement as yet, it is true, dimly perceived, but none the less sure even in its premonitions.

From Rome Petrarch moved to Parma, where he stayed for a year under the protection of the Visconti. Azzo di Visconti was his firm friend, and had accompanied him to Rome for the coronation. The poet retired for a while to a summer retreat on the spurs of the

Apennines above Reggio, and there he took up his *Africa* once more, letting no day pass without a line. The work grew upon him, and when he returned to Parma the poem wholly engrossed his energies. Hiring a pleasant house and garden, beyond the din of the city, he made a great effort and finished his epic *currente calamo*. The impulse thus given to his literary industry was destined never to flag, and the *Africa*, with its attendant studies, was driving him more and more to the pursuit of Humanistic learning. Other and humbler labourers in the same field recognised in Petrarch a new force, and one of them, the schoolmaster of Pontremoli, near Perugia, was not hindered by age or blindness from making a pious pilgrimage to Parma to hear the voice of the master and touch the hand that was leading on a new day for western Europe and for the world.

CHAPTER VII

PETRARCH—*continued*

In 1342 Petrarch returned to Avignon. There he found a new Pope, Clement VI., who appointed him to the priory of St. Nicholas of Miliarino, in the diocese of Pisa, to which three other benefices were afterwards added. It is curious to note that Petrarch declined the papal secretaryship, an office which, as will be shown later, was of vital consequence to the cause of Humanism during the following century. His influence with Clement VI. had also a remarkable consequence, somewhat to his loss, on the poet's private advancement in humane learning. He was eager to learn Greek, but as yet teachers were few and inefficient. Sometime before, however, in 1339, Petrarch had discovered at Avignon a makeshift tutor in the person of a Calabrian, the Abbot Barlaam. This person, an apostate from the Orthodox Church, was no great Grecian, but Petrarch went to him gladly for the sake of the ancient speech and wisdom of Greece, to which Barlaam at least held the key. Petrarch had got little further than the Greek alphabet when his studies were interrupted by his own kindness of heart. A bishopric fell vacant in Calabria, and the poet persuaded the Pope to present Barlaam to the see. He parted from his tutor under a full sense of intellectual loss.

Thereafter Petrarch, moving between Avignon and Vaucluse, his peaceful hermitage by the banks of the Sorgues, devoted himself to Latin prose composition, and produced his *Lives of Illustrious Men*, a series of *Letters to Dead Authors* as charming in their style as the similar but slighter work of an eminent writer lately departed. Petrarch's *On the Contempt of the World* and his *Secretum* belong also to this period, and the last is remarkable for its intimate and introspective note. His *Laura* sonnets had already helped him to unlock his heart and ease his wound. Save Dante's *Vita Nuova* the world had not for many generations seen the revelation of personality.

in a writer's work. Passing beyond the Middle Ages, the last great example of personal frankness in literature had been St. Augustine's *Confessions*. These were in Petrarch's mind at this time, for he cast his *Secretum* in the form of dialogues with the saint himself. To Augustine he lays bare his soul. Although a churchman, Petrarch had not been austere. Not even the image of Laura had held him back from the indulgence of less worthy loves. Passage after passage of St. Augustine's *Confessions* might be quoted which must have seemed to Petrarch the very mirror of his own youth, when he was a gay ruffler in the streets of Avignon. We remember his fastidiousness in dress. Even that can be paralleled from the Bishop of Hippo.

'With a superlative kind of vanity I took a pride to pass for a spruce and gentle companion (*elegans et urbanus esse*). I forced myself into love, with which I affected to be ensnared. My God, my Mercy, with how much sourness didst thou, of thy goodness to me, besour that sweetness.' [1]

Sweetness indeed besoured! Giovanni, Petrarch's natural son by an unknown woman, proved a continual sorrow to his father. The poet was in some measure to blame. He tried to force the boy to follow in his own footsteps—he wished to make a scholar of him—but Giovanni had other views. Petrarch, overburdened with a sense of responsibility, made the usual mistake. He lectured and preached. The boy, not really bad, was in continual trouble during his short life. He died of the plague at Milan, aged twenty-four, in 1361. The event is recorded in that favourite copy of Virgil which served Petrarch as an intimate diary. There he chronicled his meeting with Laura and the date of her death. There, too, he wrote with poignant regret a few lines of farewell to his son, 'one Giovanni, a man born to bring toil and grief to me.' But Petrarch's errors were not without compensation. Giovanni had a sister, Francesca, whose devotion to her father brightened his declining years. Of her he might have said (had he known the as yet undiscovered 'Agricola' of Tacitus) that it was Francesca's task *assidere valetudini, fovere deficientem.*

Very amiable is Petrarch's account of his studious retirement at Vaucluse. He took delight in country pleasures, he lived simply,

[1] St. Augustine, *Confessions*, III. i., Watts's trans., 1631.

PETRARCH

From the Portrait in the Laurentian Library, Florence

Photo Alinari

enjoying his grapes, figs and nuts; for recreation he fished and worked in his two gardens. He dressed like a ploughman or a shepherd; in a word, his life at Vaucluse was an eclogue, consciously planned, perhaps, to realise something of the spirit of his beloved Virgil. Yet, though his dress was rustic, the original dandy of earlier days at Avignon would not be altogether repressed. He kept some better suits by him, and recalls with gentle humour his former pleasure in making a fine appearance among his equals, yet always, he hopes, in good taste. Nor was his ideal purely Virgilian. He harks back to the strenuous and simple days of the Roman Republic. His house might be that of Cato or Fabricius. He keeps two servants—rather trying—and a dog. His bailiff lives next door. It is hard to realise that six centuries separate us from this picture of the literary man playing at rusticity, a fashion that has revived of recent years. The habit makes usually for productiveness, and so at least Petrarch found it.

His passion for antiquity had, however, a less dilettante phase, if not in himself, in another. It reacted powerfully on Rienzi when he visited Avignon in 1342. That they met on this occasion cannot be established by actual evidence, but there is a tradition of their association; and their later correspondence has been taken to imply previous personal acquaintance. However that may be, when Rienzi made his memorable effort to restore the system of ancient Rome, Petrarch wrote to encourage him. This led to an inevitable estrangement between the poet and his friends, the Colonna family, whose power Rienzi had imperilled. Petrarch set out for Rome to stand by the Tribune of the People, but was checked and astounded by news which showed that Rienzi had let zeal outrun discretion. The massacre of the Colonna gave Petrarch pause. He halted at Genoa, and wrote entreating Rienzi to have a care what he was about.

It was too late. The impetuous Tribune, blinded by pride, was rushing on his own doom. His failure, defeat and flight left Petrarch broken, and despairing of his country. Petrarch has been blamed for his attitude towards Rienzi. In the first blaze of the young Tribune's power he favoured him. He saw, as it were, the world's great age begin anew; all that he had hoped and dreamed of a restored Rome seemed actually within sight. Small wonder that he was dazzled, and that with a poet's impetuosity he made haste to

hail the deliverer. But Petrarch was in a difficult position. He owed much to the Colonna family, and when Rienzi laid violent hands on them he hesitated. The root of his wavering lies in the fact that Petrarch's enthusiasm was fundamentally literary. It is the old strife between the contemplative life and the life of action.

Rienzi appealed to Petrarch as the youthful scholar whose imagination had been fired by study of the ancient classics and of inscriptions. But when it came to practical measures, even to bloodshed, in order to realise the ancient ideal, Petrarch found himself unprepared. The dreams of the study would not bear translation into the struggles of the Forum. In this last effort to recapture the glory of old Rome both Rienzi and Petrarch failed. Neither escapes ignominy, but the Tribune at least took action. So much cannot be said for the poet. His act of reparation, the intercession that released Rienzi from prison, on the plea that he too was a poet, is unfortunately only a legend, characteristic, however, of an age that was pleased to revive homage to an ancient sentiment, the inviolable character of the *sacer vates*. Petrarch's part in the Rienzi incident does him little credit. He forgot the stern realities with which a reformer must be ready to cope. Nor is Rienzi free from a similar charge. He too was overmuch swayed by a literary ideal. He took action, it is true, but he lacked the constructive ability to adapt an ancient system to modern needs. He acted, and then he overacted. Theatricality, an overwhelming self-consciousness that he, Rienzi, was appearing before the world as one of his adored ancients, *qua* ancient, seduced and debauched his patriotism. Overweening pride and reckless oppression did the rest. Rienzi was an anachronism, and he paid the penalty. In spite of the dreams of Dante, of Rienzi, and of Petrarch, Rome, as a system of government, was an outworn formula; but she had still a mission. Her recovered literature was to give a new impulse to human thought, though this lay entirely outside the field of practical politics. In that Petrarch intervened only to supply an incident in his career that does him doubtful credit. The most that can be said for him is that he was willing to risk estranging the Colonna, but the moment that the situation became acute he compromised. As public men he condemned the Colonna, as private friends he continued to extol them. The position indicates the subtlety of his mind, a subtlety not

altogether admirable. When Cardinal Colonna died, Petrarch wrote to his father a letter of condolence quite in the ancient manner. It is nothing more than an elegant classical exercise, in which erudition carried the Humanist safely over the difficult places of emotion. In a word, it is the artificial production of one who was trying to please both parties. Petrarch would have commanded more respect had he left it unwritten.

There may be some danger, however, of exaggerating the importance of Petrarch's relations with the struggle between the Colonna and Rienzi. The poet himself did not escape this. He believed that he had endangered his own position, but, in truth, the men of affairs did not trouble to take Petrarch's political partisanship very seriously. They estimated it at its proper worth as a thing negligible, and continued to favour the man whose true work lay not in reviving the Roman Republic, but the Republic of Letters. The intervention of poets in politics can never be wholly divorced from the incongruous, if not the ludicrous. Party leaders smile, salute the poet in society, and go about their own business. *Chacun à son métier.* So it was with Petrarch. He continued to interest himself in public questions, but his influence was not important. In spite of his apprehensions, he remained everywhere a welcome guest. Again he declined an offer of the papal secretaryship. But although the princely courts of Italy and the Holy See in exile favoured him, he was to incur a slight reverse even at Avignon on the death of Clement VI. and the accession of Innocent VI. The latter Pontiff, ill-advised by some jealous cardinal, an enemy of the new learning, who was in a small minority of the Curia, contemplated excommunicating Petrarch because he studied Virgil and must therefore be a necromancer. The matter did not go beyond a proposal, but this recrudescence of mediæval superstition disgusted the poet heartily. He left Avignon for ever. Thenceforth he resided in northern Italy. Study and patriotism were to be his chief employments.

His patriotism, however, was obscured by a sudden cloud. At Milan the archbishop, Giovanni Visconti, offered the poet a comfortable maintenance if only he would stay there and add his lustre to the court. Petrarch at first pleaded that the noise of cities was little to his taste, but in the end he yielded on the promise

of perfect quiet and a pleasant house in the suburbs. Florence was furious at this weakness; it seemed monstrous and anomalous that the advocate of a free Italy should accept the hospitality of the tyrant Visconti. Boccaccio wrote to remonstrate with his friend, veiling his censures in a graceful allegory. Petrarch begged the question in his reply. One could not readily reject the kindly attentions of the great without seeming arrogant. A poor excuse and a poor case. The Visconti were subtle knaves. Once they held Petrarch, they kept him by insidious flatteries. The poet, poor man, never seems to have realised that he was on exhibition, a noble ornament truly, but to all intents and purposes a creature of that archbishop whom Boccaccio called the false priest of Pan, a monster of treachery and crime.

One great joy came to Petrarch at Milan. Nicholas Syrgerius, the Greek general, presented him with a MS. of Homer. It was, alas! only a dead letter to the poet, but he embraced the text passionately, and apostrophised Homer in a speech of eloquent longing for knowledge of the Greek tongue. Always subtle, where learning, if not where worldly and political wisdom are concerned, Petrarch will not acknowledge that the blind bard is dead to him, rather is he dead to the bard. Such fine points are entirely characteristic of the man. Already the Renaissance had begotten in its first prophet a delicate pedantry, a juggling euphuism. Therein lurked the seeds of death. The age was to die of 'conceits,' but not, fortunately, until the better and stronger part of Petrarch's work had borne worthy fruit for Italy and for Europe.

Another pleasant incident of Petrarch's life at Milan was his friendship with Pandolfo Malatesta, soldier and scholar, who had enlisted under the banner of the Visconti. Malatesta had the poet's portrait painted. Petrarch, though duly flattered, looked the gift horse in the mouth very frankly. The picture, he said, was both expensive and bad. But Malatesta, it seems, bore the poet no grudge for his candour. Petrarch had a happy knack of keeping the right side of people even when he had abused them. About this time he lectured the Emperor Charles IV. for absenteeism. Just as Dante had looked to Henry VII. for the salvation of Italy, so Petrarch now fixed his hopes on Charles. When the Emperor came to Italy he made friends with his candid critic. It is impossible

not to infer from repeated instances that, in the eyes of professional politicians, Petrarch was considered quite negligible as a political force. They had the wisdom to see where his true greatness lay, and to treat him accordingly. They reverenced the poet and the scholar, the would-be politician they seem to have treated with good-natured contempt. In the hands of the Visconti, Petrarch's relations with Charles were wrested to curious ends, and resulted in a comic-opera situation. After the Emperor had made his somewhat ignominious departure from Italy, which had called down further reproaches from Petrarch, the Visconti suspected Charles of working against them. They contrived a propitiatory embassy to Prague, with Petrarch as titular chief. The poet was delighted. He would have another hit at Charles, a literal home-thrust this time. Did the Visconti know that the Emperor really enjoyed the poet's moral lectures, and that therefore this curious ambassador would be right welcome? He would keep Charles amused and in good humour while wiser-headed attachés did the real business. It looks like it. Unfortunately, precise details are lacking, but we know that Emperor and poet remained on the best of terms. The mission, however, shows the Visconti in a very ugly light, and Petrarch as a simple-minded tool in their hands. No doubt his philippics, fierce enough on paper, were toned down in conversation to elegant citing of classical allusions, more or less, probably rather less, pertinent. They would be presented in the spirit that hesitated 'to reject the favours of the great.' That was Petrarch's initial error in his entanglement with the tyrants of Milan. It pursued him to the end, and drew him at last into conduct utterly unworthy, his attack upon the patriot-democrat, Bussolari of Pavia. Petrarch had never much backbone. What he had was temporarily sapped by the evil influences of Milan. The embassy to Prague shows him an amiable simpleton; in the Bussolari affair he degenerates into the creature of the Visconti. It is a miserable passage, which we would gladly erase.

In the end of 1358 Petrarch's sojourn in Milan was broken by visits to Padua and Venice. In the spring of the following year he returned, and received a visit, long promised, from Boccaccio. It is a meeting memorable in the annals of the Renaissance. The first of the Humanists, who was setting Latin scholarship on a sure foundation, had for his guest the fellow-student and disciple who was to

lead the way in doing the same work for Greek. In Petrarch's own words, 'the pleasant days slid by silently and unperceived.' It was a time fruitful for both poet and novelist. They were in complete sympathy on all points save one. Boccaccio, professor of the interpretation of Dante, could not interest Petrarch very heartily in his great predecessor. The reasons are obvious. Dante was no Humanist. Of native Italian poetry Petrarch thought lightly. He confesses to a tempered admiration for Dante. In matters literary he is always the inveterate critic. Dante's Latin could have had no charms for him. Dante's Italian poems, though confessedly great, even pre-eminent, did not really interest Petrarch. The two men belonged to different dispensations: that is the whole matter. But it may be objected that Boccaccio was also as ardent a disciple of the new learning, and yet he regarded Dante with a filial love. The key lies in individual temperament and in difference of training. Boccaccio was a man of infinitely broader sympathies than Petrarch, his balance had not been disturbed by flattery, he could keep a more liberal and open mind. He had the added advantage of knowing some Greek, and that knowledge must have qualified and corrected his attitude towards Latin. Petrarch's great scholarship remained, by an unhappy accident, one-sided. Boccaccio, less brilliant as a specialist, had more all-round culture, with its consequent breadth of view. For him the vernacular poetry, and above all the poetry of the greatest vernacular master, was something that had also its significance. He could, without prejudice to the ancient tongues, appraise it at its true value. On his return to Florence after the Milan visit, he sent Petrarch a MS. of the *Divine Comedy*, together with a delicately phrased hint that the poet of Laura might devote more attention to Dante than he had hitherto done. But it was not to be. Petrarch was set in his own ways.

He was now fifty-four years of age, with a life of solid accomplishment to his credit. The sonnets to Laura remained his chief title to fame. Already completed were the *Africa* (unpublished and known only to his intimates), the *Eclogues*, the *De Contemptu Mundi*, and the *Secretum*, *De Otio Religiosorum*, the great patriotic lyric *Italia*, and a huge mass of correspondence, not casual, but deliberate literary works, more in the nature of rhetorical essays than of letter-writing in our sense. These last are our most important documentary

evidence for the life and times of Petrarch. In them he reveals himself with complete frankness. Until this year, 1359, these letters remained uncollected. Petrarch now set himself to edit and group his epistles, a laborious task, which occupied him at intervals till 1365, when he left them, with later additions, in their present form: the *Familiar Letters*, the *Poetic*, the *Letters to Famous Men of Antiquity*, and the *Various Letters*. A still later volume, the fascinating *Letters of an Old Man*, contained correspondence from 1361 onwards to the end of Petrarch's life. He burnt at least a thousand other letters: 'committed them to Vulcan's revision' is his own characteristic account of the holocaust. But these writings represented only a part of his labours. He was indefatigable in the search for new MSS. of the classics, and these he annotated diligently. His favourite copy of Virgil still remains to prove how carefully he studied his texts. During the last part of his life he extended his labours in the cause of Humanism. In 1362 he removed to Venice, where for the next six years he was often resident, though Padua and Pavia also claimed him for considerable periods. The Venetian Republic, in return for a promise that Petrarch's library would go to the state after his death, gave him the Palazzo Molina. Wherever he stayed, Petrarch kept about him and trained a staff of copyists, engaged on the multiplication of classical MSS., for it was a principal article of the poet-scholar's literary creed that the new knowledge must be spread abroad as widely as possible. He did, in fact, the work not only of a critical editor, as far as criticism had gone in his day, but in some sense the work of a publisher. To this he devoted the greater part of his means. His own library was magnificent, and but for the criminal carelessness of the Venetians, who neglected to claim and house the collection that was theirs by right, we might have possessed it intact to this day. As it is, some of the treasures are in Paris and Milan.

The latter days of Petrarch were saddened by the loss of many friends, but he still continued active in his pursuits. Native Italian poetry claimed him once more, and his last work was the *Triumph of Love, of Death, of Chastity*, wherein he celebrated Laura once more. A lighter recreation of his old age was the turning into Latin of Boccaccio's tale of *Patient Griselda*. With his usual indifference to Italian literature, he had not troubled, until about the year

1372, to read his friend's *Decameron*, which had been finished in 1358.

The end was now at hand. Broken in health, saddened, but still unwearied, Petrarch vowed to die in harness. For years past northern Italy, rent by civil strife, had given the poet-student no continuous resting place. Since 1369 he had found congenial quiet in a summer retreat at Arquà, among the Euganean Hills. There he had built a house, which still stands, and there he watched the sun go down. He speaks with gentle humour and resignation of his increasing illness, and even allows himself a sly hit or two at the differing of doctors. Still he worked on; he was the same untiring correspondent; he composed a treatise on Government and an Address to Posterity. Once more he praised poetry as the most glorious of the arts. But he held one other thing dearer even than poetry. His last word on the ruling intellectual passion of his life, learning, was addressed to Boccaccio.

In that letter he shows clearly that he knew very well for what he stood in the new movement. He accepts Boccaccio's eulogy, that he has been 'a stirrer up of the wits of many.' He speaks of the long neglect of classical studies; he is pleased to be hailed as their foremost champion. Therefore, no slackness! Boccaccio, the affectionate disciple, had hinted that the master might now take a little well-earned rest. To borrow a phrase from a yet distant century, the younger generation was knocking at the door. Let them take up the burden. But Petrarch would not agree. He admitted that the new men had work to do, but he felt a reasonable pride in his leadership, and while power remained he would hold his own place. So the quiet days at Arquà slid by, days full of industry, broken by ever-increasing weakness. The recurrence of fainting fits warned his friends that the end was at hand. It came on the 18th or the 20th of July 1374. There is some doubt as to the precise date. The 20th of July was Petrarch's seventieth birthday, and one tradition says he died at his desk, with the epitome of his *Lives of Illustrious Men* before him. It may be only a legend, suggested by the fact that his great-grandfather also died on his birthday. However that may be, the story is worth noting for its appropriate significance. Another tradition says he died in the arms of his friend, Lombardi.

Italy gave her poet laureate and foremost scholar a splendid funeral. What is more to the point is that she had honoured him in his life. Not many men of genius have been so fully recognised in their own day. It may be that Petrarch owed something to his circle of influential friends, who certainly lost no opportunity of advancing his fame and interests. But their readiness to do so is in itself a significant thing. The age had awakened consciously to that spring-tide influence of which we have seen the first stirrings in Francis of Assisi. Its homage to Petrarch was homage to the new conception of the intellect as a world-force. The narrow bonds of scholastic subtleties were broken. Henceforth the human mind was to assert itself as a free agent. Drawing strength and inspiration from the great masters of antiquity, who had once more found their true interpretation, it was to use these as the bridge to the full liberty of modern thought. The process was not to be unbroken, it was not to escape the blighting influence of pedantry and mere jejune imitation: the classical Renaissance, as far as Italy was concerned, was to wither almost as quickly as it had flowered, but the impulse, manifested under other forms, remained. To-day we are still the heirs of the work begun by Petrarch.

CHAPTER VIII

BOCCACCIO

SIDE by side with Petrarch, we have seen that friend of his who, poet and story-teller, had a fame in Italy only second to that of the singer of Laura, and who was to exercise an even wider influence upon the literature of Europe. Giovanni Boccaccio is a threefold character. He was a poet and a prose-writer, whose works were the quintessential expression of the Renaissance, and to these he added the accomplishments of a scholar in the new scholarship, and did so much to advance the cause of the ancient classics that he forms the most important link between Petrarch, the first of the Humanists, and those great schools and academies of learning which were afterwards to flourish in all the important towns of Italy.

The birthplace of Boccaccio is uncertain. It may have been Florence, it may have been Paris. We at any rate know the year, which was 1313. He was the natural son of a merchant of Certaldo, who wished the boy to follow his own way of life. He acknowledged him, had him well educated, and then tried him for a while in his own counting-house, but Boccaccio's genius did not lie in the ledger. He left commerce, and tried to study canon law at Bologna, but that, too, was distasteful, so he went to Naples, where he mixed in good society, and made some name for himself by his tales in prose and verse. While at Naples—if we are to believe Villani—Boccaccio received in a characteristically romantic manner the impulse which made him a lifelong devotee of the ancient classics. The sight of Virgil's tomb aroused in him a yearning for a poet's fame, and from that day poetry was his mistress. But he was not content with the merely incorporeal object of worship. At Naples he found in the lady whom he has celebrated as Fiametta a further reason for the cultivation of the Muses. He has celebrated her in the *Filicopo* as the daughter of Robert of Sicily; in the *Fiametta* he speaks of her

as the 'beautiful Neapolitan, noble but not rare.' His first period of literary activity, that in which his poems were produced, may be taken as extending from 1340 to 1350. In that time we have the *Fiametta*, the *Ameto*, the *Amorosa Visione*, the *Teseide* and the *Filostrato*. The *Visione* is further devoted to the celebration of *Fiametta*. The *Teseide* and *Filostrato* are semi-heroic romances founded upon the Fabliaux. Despite their too great freedom, which has barred certain of his poems to the general reader, *Teseide* and the *Filostrato* of Boccaccio are among the Italian poems which have had a memorable influence upon English literature. The former is the story of Palamon and Arcite which appears in Chaucer's *Knight's Tales*, and is also the foundation of Fletcher's *Two Noble Kinsmen*. The *Filostrato*, which combines passages of intensely voluptuous kind with moments of supreme beauty, is the story of *Troilus and Cressida*, and was in part translated by Chaucer in his poem of the same name, and used by Shakespeare for his play. The story, originally called *Troilus and Briseis*, had become very popular in Europe through Guido of Messina's Latin poem of *Briseis*, which first appeared in 1278.

It was about the year 1348 or 1350 that Boccaccio first met Petrarch. We have already considered their meeting, and their literary intercourse, as far as Italian, and especially the works of Dante, were concerned. By this time Boccaccio was filling the chair of the interpretation of Dante in the University of Florence, and about the time when Petrarch's enthusiasm for the classics was communicating itself to his friends, Boccaccio's life enters upon an entirely new phase. He ceased to be the mere court singer, and while he was still meditating and writing the work on which his fame most securely rests, he came into notice as a man of ability, of whom the state would do well to take heed. For the fifteen years between 1350 and 1365 his life was that of a diplomatist, a scholar and a citizen. He undertook political missions to Rome and to Avignon, and he produced his Commentary upon the *Divine Comedy*, which is now chiefly valuable for the light it throws upon the life of contemporary Florence. In 1358 he finished the *Decameron*, which had cost him ten years' labour, and the world welcomed yet another great book. Boccaccio was fortunate in that he had not to wait for fame. His countrymen, and indeed Europe generally, gave the

Decameron immediate recognition, and it passed into universal literature. Of the book itself, something must be said in more detail in a later part of this chapter. For the present, in order to maintain the sequence of the narrative, we shall deal with Boccaccio's work as a scholar of the Renaissance. Petrarch, as we have seen, made no progress in Greek. His opportunities were insufficient, and at length he found himself too old to undertake the work seriously. But Boccaccio was younger by almost a decade, and Petrarch successfully communicated to him his own enthusiasm for Greek studies. What Petrarch could not himself accomplish was done at length by Boccaccio, and while Petrarch ranks as the first of the Humanists, Boccaccio is the first of the Grecians. He had great difficulties to contend with in his studies, and the sum of his accomplishments would, at the very best, be thought little of to-day by first-class men and senior classics beside the Isis or the Cam, but he cannot be held of less importance on that account, for it is to Boccaccio as a pioneer that we owe all that has been accomplished since his day. In his house in Florence, about the year 1360, he lodged the scholar Leontius Pilatus, and was the means of having him appointed to the first professorship established in Italy. As a Latinist, his accomplishment was less than that of Petrarch, and his prose never rose to that master's pitch of excellence, vitality and pure Latin feeling.

Nor as a Latinist was Boccaccio ever for a moment to be compared with himself as a writer of Italian prose and verse. In imitation of Petrarch's book of *Illustrious Men*, Boccaccio wrote a treatise on *Illustrious Women*, but his principal piece of Latin is a small folio on Mythology, claiming to be founded on the ancient authorities alone. It is a very curious and also an important work, for it is the first dictionary of fabulous history produced in Europe. Of such a work the men who were now beginning to explore the ancient classics stood in urgent need, and whatever may be the defects of Boccaccio's production, it remains a heroic effort, for it was composed in a day when there were no guides or handbooks, dictionaries or indexes of any description for the rediscovered literature of Greece and Rome. Such compendiums as this of Boccaccio's had to be founded on the independent reading of the author himself, and its compilation called not only for colossal industry, but for marvellous

gifts of memory as well. In the next period of Humanism the production of such works was a great part of a learned man's labours. It must be remembered that it was Boccaccio who showed the way. The book, with its quaint allegorical woodcuts, is a most interesting curiosity. It treats the legends allegorically, and this circumstance gave the work its peculiar appeal to Boccaccio's contemporaries. Allegory was in the air. Boccaccio himself was officially engaged in the interpretation of the greatest of all allegories—Dante Alighieri. A minor handbook of the same kind was Boccaccio's *Mountains, Woods, and Waters*, designed for the use of students of the Latin poets. This is the first work on Ancient Geography, and is little more than an alphabetical list of places. Incidentally, as Dr. Sandys notes, the book contains two curiously pleasing evidences of personal inclination. As a patriotic Florentine, Boccaccio placed the Arno first on his list, and his friendship for Petrarch leads him to overflow with information about the fountain of the Sorgues, on the banks of which Petrarch had his retreat.

The writer of the *Decameron* wrote also Latin eclogues of some merit. In one of these he celebrated Petrarch's *Africa*, and there he shows that he was well aware of the backward state of learning in England. He praises the *Africa*, and says that the time will come when it will be appreciated even by the backward Briton—*studiis tardus Britannus*.[1] His knowledge of Latin poetry was extensive, and with his own hand he made a complete copy of *Terence*, which is now in the Laurentian Library. His enthusiasm for manuscripts was equal to that of Petrarch, and he lost no opportunity of examining likely places for finds. It is to a pupil of his that we owe one of our most valuable accounts of the state of neglect into which the monastic libraries had fallen when the spirit of the Renaissance providentially intervened to save their treasures from destruction. When he visited Monte Cassino,

> 'Being eager to see the library which he had heard was very noble, he himself besought one of the monks to do him the favour of opening it. Pointing to a lofty staircase, the monk answered swiftly, "Go up, it is already opened." Boccaccio stepped up the staircase with delight, only to find the treasure-

[1] Sandys, *Harvard Lectures on the Revival of Learning*, p. 22.

house of learning destitute of door or any kind of fastening, while the grass was growing in the window-sill, and the dust reposing on the books and book-shelves. Turning over the manuscripts, he found many rare and ancient works, with whole sheets torn out, or with the margins ruthlessly clipped. As he left the room he burst into tears, and on asking a monk whom he met in the cloisters to explain the neglect, was told that some of the inmates of the monastery, wishing to gain a few soldi, had torn out whole handfuls of leaves, and made them into Psalters, which they sold to boys, and had cut off strips of parchment, which they turned into amulets to sell to women.'

There is a similar story of neglect told by Poggio of the library of St. Gallen. Boccaccio's favourite Latin historians were Livy and Tacitus, and some have suggested that the manuscripts of the *Histories* and the *Annals*, which belonged to Niccoli, and passed into the Medicean Library, may have been brought by Boccaccio from Monte Cassino. No proof is possible, but it is not unlikely that he was acquainted with that manuscript, and that he used it in making his own transcription of Tacitus. In the Laurentian Library there is a copy of Livy annotated by him, or rather bearing some introductory notes on the fly-leaf. These were published by Hearne, the Oxford antiquary, in 1708, without any suspicion of the authorship.

While Boccaccio was thus laying the foundation of European scholarship, his own reputation as the greatest living master of the short story was constantly increasing throughout the Continent, and even in England the backward. He became, in fact, proverbial. Somewhere we remember to have read the phrase, given as an illustration of a light occupation for leisure: 'As gentlemen may read a merry tale in Boccace.' But from that lighter side of his humanity, a work even more humane than his humanism, Boccaccio was at length to turn away with regret and self-reproach. He could not escape the inevitable contradictions of his time. He, the apostle of the lighter life, was suddenly turned towards serious thought. He experienced what would be called, by a certain school, a conversion, a change to be noted among many outstanding figures

of the Renaissance, and thenceforward he renounced poetry and the art of the story-teller. He remained still a diligent scholar, and would, but for the sound advice of Petrarch, have buried himself in a cloister, but his friend argued with a sweet reasonableness, and finally convinced Boccaccio that it would be ignoble to cut himself off from the world. He remained, as Sandys says, a layman, and it was mainly among the laymen of Florence that his influence survived. Although he had renounced what he considered his folly, he remained whole-hearted and cheerful to the end, delighting in nature, in the view from his windows, and moved by the song of the nightingale. He has left a pleasant description of his surroundings at his father's town, Certaldo, where he spent his last days. He believed that there he had a foretaste of the eternal felicity, and died on the 21st of December 1375, leaving behind him a name that mankind has held in no less affection than the greatest of all his works. His poetry is read only by specialists. His pioneer work in scholarship is now of interest only to the curious in these matters; but his *Decameron*, with its extraordinary play of feeling, its wit, its mirth, its precious reflections of the spirit of the most fascinating period in history, is as fresh to-day as when the ink lay wet on the page. Of that perennial fund of entertainment, that most noteworthy side-light on contemporary life and manners, we have now to speak in such detail as the compass of this chapter will permit.

The story of the *Decameron* is an oft-told tale, and it may be objected that any further paraphrase or description of its charms is more than superfluous. But the present work is intended for those to whom the history of this period and its literature is not a matter of common knowledge, and therefore some outline of this most formative work will not be out of place. The actual material of the stories is not new, and so far as they are concerned they do not show Boccaccio in the light of a great inventor, but rather of a great borrower. Like Virgil before him, however, he touched nothing that he did not adorn, and apart from the fascination of his method as historian there is the supreme grace of the setting which he gave to the *Hundred Tales*. Many of the stories have come down from an earlier age, and although they are Italianised, and the characters are made to speak and act like people of the fourteenth

century, they are not so uniformly typical of Boccaccio's period as the beautiful *mise en scène* in which he placed them. There he has presented us with his supreme document for the life, the manners, and incidentally the morals, of his own time. That morality, be it noted, has been much called in question, not without reason, for many of the stories are of the most grossly licentious character, but as regards his story-tellers this accusation cannot stand. He brings them together, it is true, in the most risky situation, which is not without its own piquancy in the general effect of the book, but the whole attitude of the novelist's mind, and indeed that of his narrators, is summed up in the motto, 'Honi soit qui mal y pense.' And certainly those young men and maidens of his who, for a brief fortnight, cast in their lot together in a Florentine country house, and lived a life of liberty, did so with the most perfect freedom from reproach. The setting of the *Decameron* remains an incomparable idyll, the beauty of which is heightened and emphasised, entirely in the Renaissance manner, by the background of that stricken Florence from which those gay young people had fled.

The year is 1348—the year of that terrible plague which devastated the fairest of the Tuscan cities. Boccaccio proclaims himself the perfect artist in his manner of opening the *Decameron*, where he plunges at once into the heart of the matter, and after a gallant paragraph addressed to the ladies, sets down an account of the plague which is worthy to stand beside that of Thucydides. He tells how, whether it was owing to the influence of the planets, or was sent by God as a just punishment for the sins of Florence, the plague had passed westward from the Levant, and, making incredible havoc as it went, at last reached Italy, and laid hold of the city on the Arno. There, in spite of all the means which art or human thought could suggest, such as keeping the city clear of filth, the exclusion of all suspected persons, and the publication of copious instructions for the preservation of health, and notwithstanding manifold humble supplications offered to God, in processions and otherwise, it began to show itself in the spring of the aforesaid year in a sad and wonderful manner. With the most minute detail, and a diagnosis almost worthy of a physician, Boccaccio sets down the hideous symptoms of the disease, and tells how it spread daily like fire when it comes in contact with large

PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN HOLDING
A MEDAL OF COSIMO DE' MEDICI

(*Probably by Botticelli*)

Reproduced from the panel in the Florence Academy.

masses of combustibles. He draws a graphic picture of the stricken city, and of the paralysing effects of terror on morals and manners. Some, putting all restraint aside, maintained free living to be a better safeguard than moderation, and would balk no desire or appetite they wished to gratify, drinking and revelling incessantly from tavern to tavern, or in private houses—which were frequently found to be deserted by the owners, and therefore common to every one—yet strenuously avoiding amid all this brutal indulgence all contact with the infected.[1]

Boccaccio tells how the plight of Florence grew more and more desperate, until brother fled from brother, wife from husband, and, what is more uncommon, a parent from his own child. The most unheard-of laxity became the general practice, and this, Boccaccio hints, had a permanently deleterious effect on morals. When he has filled in his canvas, and has profoundly impressed his reader with the misery and hopelessness of Florence, he suddenly introduces a more pleasing picture, and carries us one Tuesday morning to the Church of Santa Maria Novella, where seven young ladies, all in deep mourning, had found themselves the sole congregation at the early service. Their ages ranged from eighteen to twenty-eight. They were all relations or near friends, discreet, nobly descended and accomplished, pleasing both in person and behaviour. 'I do not mention their names,' says Boccaccio, 'lest any of them should be put to the blush by something hereinafter related, for the limits of allowed disport are much narrower in our day than they were in those times.' This remark is rather curious, following as it does upon his assertion that a certain levity, superinduced by the plague, was never wholly corrected, and at the very furthest, supposing the introduction to have been written last, it could not be later by more than ten years than the plague itself. The *Decameron* indeed was begun in the plague year. The explanation, however, may be in the words, 'allowed disport,' and may point to some increased stringency of municipal law which had come about as a reaction from the debacle. The Puritanical stringency of Savonarola was still nearly a century and a half away. Although he will not mention their names, Boccaccio invents fanciful titles for these ladies—titles that shall in some way suggest their character or appearance.

[1] The very same results of panic, it will be remembered, manifested themselves in London in 1666.

Among them appears his adored Fiametta, and with her are Pampinea, Filomena, Emilia, Lauretta, Neifile and Eliza. By chance rather than by any appointment, they got into a corner of the church, and there, seated in a row, they began to converse concerning the nature of the times. Pampinea, the eldest, in a rather sententious discourse, sets out to prove the duty of self-preservation. It is clear that the awful scenes in the streets of Florence have made a most profound impression on the speaker's mind, and she proposes that they should leave the town and choose some place of retirement where they may make themselves innocently merry without offering the least violence to the dictates of reason or their own consciences. Evidently they were ladies of great wealth and position, for Pampinea remarks incidentally that each of them has more than one country house. They hear her carefully, but there is an obvious difficulty—obvious in those days at any rate, and for some centuries later, although in our own times seriously discounted. Filomena immediately raises this objection, and so gives a new and most interesting turn to the discussion. Pampinea had proposed a bold thing, and with the most perfect simplicity and naturalness, although assuredly to the scandal and derision of certain of her sisters of the present day, she exclaimed: 'We are but women, nor is any of us so ignorant as not to know how little able we shall be to conduct such an affair without some man to help us. We are naturally fickle, obstinate, suspicious and fearful, and I doubt much, unless we take some one into our scheme to manage it for us, that it may soon be at an end, and perhaps little to our reputation. Let us provide against this therefore before we begin.'

Eliza responds with more abominable heresy still. 'It is true,' she says, 'man is our sex's chief or head, and without his management it seldom happens that any undertaking of ours succeeds well.' Then she posed a yet more tremendous question: 'But how are these men to be come at? We all know that the greater part of our male acquaintance are dead, and the rest all dispersed abroad, avoiding what we seek to avoid. To take strangers with us would not be altogether so proper, for whilst we have regard to our safety, we should so contrive matters that wherever we do go to repose and divert ourselves no scandal may ensue from it.' By the blessing of Heaven or by the good contrivance of Boccaccio, there happened

to stroll into the church three gallant young gentlemen—Pamfilo, Filostrato and Dioneo—all well-bred and pleasant companions, and who, most fortunately, were attached to three of the seven ladies, and even more fortunately still, related to the other four. Pampinea made no undue hesitation. 'See,' she cried, 'fortune is with us, and has thrown in our way three prudent and worthy gentlemen, who will conduct and wait upon us, if we think fit to accept of their service.' The last clause is as salutary as it is pleasing, and Pampinea's exquisite assumption of the young men's bounden duty to do as they are asked cannot, we think, be unpleasing even to our most advanced modern sisters, who manage to combine, with the assertion of complete independence, a most laudable but a little time-worn fidelity to the theory of man's serviceableness. We may remember, by the by, that 'serviceable' was one of the cardinal adjectives applied by Chaucer in describing the virtues of his squire. Neifile, who was the beloved of one of the young men, was troubled about the propriety of the bolder Pampinea's scheme, but Filomena, in a splendid word of vindication, proclaims herself a new woman of the best and most commendable type. 'Never tell me what other people may think,' she says, 'so long as I know myself to be virtuous. God and the truth will be my defence, and if these young gentlemen be willing to go, we say with Pampinea that fortune is with us.' And so it is agreed. To the credit of the young men, they took the matter at first as a jest, but when they were at last convinced that the ladies were serious, they fell in readily with the scheme, and it was agreed that they should start next morning. A messenger was sent at once to the house where they proposed to stay, and the following daybreak the ladies, with some of their women, and the gentlemen, with every one his servant, set out from the city, and came to the place appointed.

There follows a very charming description of a Tuscan country house of the period. The stately palace stood on a little eminence remote from any great road, and surrounded by a beautiful wooded park, with gardens and fountains of the purest and best water. The palace itself had a fair and spacious court in the middle. Within were galleries and apartments delicately appointed. In the halls were superb paintings, and in the cellars the richest wines, 'suited rather,' says Boccaccio slyly, 'to the taste of copious topers

than of modest and virtuous ladies.' Everything is in the most perfect order, and the rooms have been decorated with the loveliest flowers of the season. The party fall at once to discussing their way of life, and the noble Pampinea, who must if her name describes her, as Boccaccio hints, have been as stately and graceful as the pine-tree, her namesake, immediately proposed a scheme for the ordering of their days. She is conscious of the burden of housekeeping and of the honour that it brings. She suggests that the burden and the honour shall be sustained by each in turn. 'The first I propose,' she says, 'shall be elected by us all, and that one on the approach of evening shall name a person to succeed for the following day, and each one, during the time of his or her government, shall give orders concerning the place where and the manner how we ought to live.' Pampinea is immediately elected by acclamation, and Filomena crowns her with laurel, whereupon she appoints Parmeno, Dioneo's servant, master of the household, and to certain of the other men-servants and women-servants she allots the various duties of the establishment. She ends with a delicious touch of Epicureanism. One and all are commanded to bring her no news but that which is good. There, by a stroke of supreme artistry, Boccaccio invokes and exorcises the lurking spectre of the plague.

Everything being ordered to the satisfaction of the company, Pampinea dismisses her friends to enjoy themselves in the gardens until dinner-time. Accordingly they walk, talking over a thousand merry things by the way, and diverting themselves by singing love-songs and wreathing garlands of flowers. With their return to the house we catch a glimpse of the luxurious civilisation of the Italian upper classes. It was a time when, as we shall see, manners generally left a great deal to be desired, but here there is a fastidiousness that would not disgrace the twentieth century. In the salon they found the table set forth, covered with the neatest linen, with the glasses reflecting a lustre like silver. Water was presented to the company to wash their hands, and all remained standing until, at the queen's order, the steward desired them to sit down.

The dishes were now served in the most elegant manner, and the best wines brought in, the servants waiting all the time with the most profound silence, and the company being well pleased with their entertainment dined with all the facetiousness and mirth

imaginable. Afterwards they danced, and enjoyed a little music on the lute and viol, and so went early to bed. Next morning at three the energetic Pampinea had them all astir, saying that much sleep in the daytime was unwholesome. The passage that follows is one of the masterpieces of Boccaccio, and condenses in its perfect phrasing all the gentle luxury which his Florentines had carried to a fine art. The suggestion of the scene and atmosphere has been likened to the opening of Plato's *Phædo*, giving the scene a harmonious setting, and striking a note that is maintained in all the interludes of the book. It is a curious thing that men of genius, who have chosen some such form as this for a masterpiece—that is to say, a series of narratives, connected by some link—have not infrequently raised those interludes to a higher pitch of art than the work itself. This is peculiarly the case in Tennyson's *Princess*, where the verses interpolated between the scenes have won a wider acceptance and are far better known than the body of the poem itself. It is possible that this is not quite so much the case with Boccaccio, as there are reasons why the reader at the present day rushes to individual stories, and too often neglects the whole scope of the work. But, on attentive consideration, the interludes rise out of the picture and form a series of exquisite vignettes. There is no doubt that it is to Boccaccio's sensitive appreciation of environment that we owe the lovely close of Castiglione's *Courtier*, where the last symposium being ended, and the last word spoken, some one throws back the curtains and reveals the dawn flooding the grey Italian landscape. And so it is in the passage that immediately precedes Boccaccio's first story, although here we have the languorous noon in place of the freshness of early morning. Pampinea thus speaks: 'As the sun is high, and the heat excessive, and nothing is to be heard save the chirping of the cicalas among the olives, it would be madness for us to think of moving yet. This is an airy place, and here are chess-boards and backgammon tables to divert yourselves; but if you will be ruled by me, you will not play at all, since it often makes the one party uneasy, without any great pleasure to the other, or the lookers-on. But let us begin and tell stories, and in this manner one person will entertain the whole company, and by the time it has gone round the worst part of the day will be over, and then we can divert ourselves as we like best.

If this be agreeable to you then let us begin; if not, you are at your own disposal until the evening.

> 'Then they went into a meadow of deep grass where the sun had little power, and having the benefit of a pleasant breeze, they sat down in a circle, as the queen had commanded, and she addressed them in this manner.'

If the ability of these gay young people was not a mere invention of the novelist's, and if the cultivated classes in Florence carried in their heads so many delightful stories ready to be related at a moment's notice, then indeed that world must have been a pleasant place, and the mentality of society, in the days before the invention of printing, must have been a livelier and more entertaining thing than it has become in an age corrupted with books. That the Florentines were ready story-tellers is perfectly true, for there is a famous instance in which Machiavelli saved an unpleasant after-dinner situation by launching into a delightful short story, and the art of being agreeable in company is no mere fiction of the novelist. It was a tradition that lasted to a much later period, and is re-echoed by that young widow in Marguerite of Navarre's *Heptameron*, who declares 'that dulness is an incurable malady.' The mind of the educated classes was full of these floating tales—of mirth, gallantry and pathos. Boccaccio took his good things where he found them, gave the stories his own inimitable turn, and permanently enriched the imagination of the world. He is careful to make the tales fit the characters of the narrator, and, for the most part, those that abound in levity are told by the young men. Boccaccio's subtlety, however, is almost unsearchable, and one can detect, underlying his methods, the penetration of a master.

To say this of the stories alone would be shamefully trite, but we are referring in this instance to the stories in relation to the story-tellers. Very cunning is the suggestion of the working of the law of association. One story leads to another in the most natural manner, just as it does in actual conversation, and when the rein has been given to fancy even the ladies are sometimes tempted to pass from one extravagance to another. There is one little series where, with the most charming naïvete, and not without the guard of certain specious excuses, those dear ladies march from impropriety

to impropriety in a way that almost belies the blushes with which Boccaccio is careful to say they received some of the men's stories.

But we must not put too high a value upon this foible. The story-tellers only followed a convention of the time. A tale was nothing to that age if it were not a tale of gallantry. With all its specious refinement, the period had a deep underlying brutality, and a love-story was held to miss its point unless some one was deceived. We recall, in this particular, Hamlet's gibe anent Polonius's taste in literature. Taking therefore the temper of the time into account, there is nothing radically at variance between some of the themes that amused the ladies of the *Decameron* and the exquisite assurance which Boccaccio has given us of their lofty character and fine feelings. What was of the lips was of the lips only. Their stories were part of a comedy of manners, which, as far as Pampinea, Fiametta and her friends were concerned, bore no relation to life.

Nowhere has perfect freedom been more absolutely blended with an austere virtue than in the camaraderie of those immortal romancers. It is an idealism that may or may not be possible in real life but is at any rate a very gracious thing in literature. It was afterwards advanced one stage further, and reduced almost to a philosophic system in the *Abbaye de Thelème* of Dr. Francis Rabelais.

The grand test of the radical soundness of Boccaccio is that the after-taste of his book is sound and wholesome. The general impression which it leaves with us is that of a serious and beautiful work, where mirth joins hands with pathos, and where a diffused ripple of sly humour attunes the whole to a grateful melody. There are, it is true, one or two passages that are best left in their native Italian, but even a profanity that to us verges on blasphemy is a very different thing when it is spoken by one of Latin race and in a Latin tongue. Europe, before the Reformation, was accustomed to a strangely familiar handling of sacred things, and to a strange obtrusion, even into church services, of undisguised buffoonery. It is in the light of that circumstance that certain of Boccaccio's stories are to be read, and at the same time it must not be forgotten that the underlying purpose of some of the wildest incidents was to expose the corruption of the religious orders. And when all is said and done, the method is so inimitable, the humour is so piquant, the characters, even at their worst, are so recognisably human,

that we are forced to laugh with Boccaccio, and in that laugh all offence evaporates. To the moralist he makes ample amends by the exquisite pathos and delicate feeling of the stories that have made the most impression on men and women of all the ages since Boccaccio wrote them. Such are 'Sigismonda and Guiscardo,' 'Isabella and the Pot of Basil,' and the equally beautiful, though less known, incident of the 'Secret Marriage of Andrevuola and Gabriotto.'

About the story of Boccaccio's that has obtained the widest currency it is difficult to speak at the present day, for it contains, in those very elements that have secured its popularity, a cause of deep offence to many of those who constitute the majority of novel-readers. Nothing in literature can so aptly illustrate the change in thought between those times and ours than the immortal story of 'Patient Griselda.' The basis of its success hitherto has lain in a conception of womanhood and of wifely duty to which even men, with all their alleged brutality, do not now generally subscribe. On close analysis, Griselda is a much ill-used woman, whose forbearance amounts in itself almost to a lack of virtue. She had done nothing to deserve the burdens that were put upon her by her husband. She was in all respects a perfect wife, and she had added to her claims upon her husband the further achievement of having known how to step gracefully from a lowly to a great position. For requital she had scorn and woe unutterable heaped upon her by a tyrant, merely to increase her ultimate value in his selfish eyes. Such a situation has become inexplicable to the present day, and the world has lost patience with 'Patient Griselda'; better still, it has lost patience with her husband. But while we can no longer justify his gratuitous tyranny, it is still possible to detect in Griselda's forbearance an idealism that is not altogether unworthy of praise. Possibly the root of the matter is that, however hardly her husband tried her, she was always haunted by her lowly birth. She believed that she was unfitted for her new position, and with supreme sacrifice she was willing, as she supposed, to free her husband of the consequences of his mistake. There was the added consideration of her children, and doubtless it was for their sake also that she consented to efface herself. It is in this respect that Griselda ceases to be pusillanimous and that she emerges a heroine. This may be hard doctrine for the present day, but those who would have sent

Griselda to law—and how many suits could she not have instituted successfully?—will do well to remember that the husband did not act out of malice, but from what is basically a perverted idealism.

These two exhibit the most touching belief in each other, in spite of appearances, that ever mortals showed, and we must remember that the husband's case is entirely hypothetical. The broad common sense of humanity does not make mistakes, and although it may not be capable of the most subtle analysis, it generally knows the right thing when it sees it, and recognises the correctness of main issues. Hence the popularity of 'Griselda,' which has been more copied and adapted than any other story in the *Decameron*. Chaucer puts it into the mouth of his Clerke of Oxenford, who tells it again with a grace and pathos worthy of the original. Petrarch loved the story, and paid it the compliment of translating it to Latin. The Clerke of Oxenford tells the pilgrims that he himself heard it 'in Padoue from a learned clerk, Fraunceyss Petrack,'

'That filled alle Itayle of poetry.'

At the end of the fourteenth century the story was played as a mystery in Paris. It has passed into an English traditional ballad, 'The Nut Browne Mayde'; it is the theme of Prior's 'Henry and Emma.' Yet although the most popular of Boccaccio's stories, it is not even in his hands intrinsically the most beautiful. 'Isabella,' despite its decadent suggestion, is probably more perfect as a story, and for power of a grim and strangely satiric order we should be inclined to place first the seventh novel of the Eighth Day. This, with its high passion, and its strange sub-texture of Renaissance brutality, a brutality that nevertheless in the end commends itself to poetic justice, is so intensely vivid that some critics have believed it to be a transcript from Boccaccio's own life. To the present day, which has with Frederic Nietzsche once more exalted the idea of hardness, the story comes home with especial force. It is so simple in its plot that there is almost nothing in it, except a situation and that situation reversed. But its poignancy carries the reader to extraordinary heights of mental torture. It is sufficiently remarkable that the writer of the present age who can touch with a sureness equal to that of the fourteenth century the cruelties and the refinements of life, has introduced into one of his most

powerful novels of modern Italy a situation that is obviously the latter-day reflection of a scene from 'Helena and the Scholar.' D'Annunzio's version is so whimsical that it amounts almost to parody, but the emotions of the excluded lover afford a perfect parallel to those described by Boccaccio, though they are on an entirely different plane. Boccaccio's beautiful and heartless Helena was beloved by a scholar, to whom she at length gave an appointment. On a night of bitter snow he repaired to her house, and was asked to wait for a few moments in the courtyard. The maid by her mistress's orders thereupon locked him in, and the unfortunate young man was kept freezing out of doors all night, while the lady, who had another visitor, occasionally mocked his misery from the window. In the morning he is allowed to depart, but both his hands and feet have been frost-bitten, and it is only with infinite difficulty that his physicians restore him. Such perfidy knows no pardon. The lover's passion is turned to the most relentless fury, and he devises a revenge in kind. Pretending to teach the lady an incantation by which she can have news of his absent rival, the scholar allures her to a lonely tower, in which she is to perform certain rites at midnight. It is a condition that she must leave all her garments at the foot of the tower. When she has ascended, the outraged scholar takes away the ladder, and leaves the lady to the rigours of an Italian summer night, which can be very chilly in the small hours. This is bad enough, but worse remains behind, for it is midsummer, and there are hours of blazing heat to be endured by the prisoner, without shelter and without comfort, for the outraged one mocks her from below. At length, when she is scorched almost to a cinder, and her delicate complexion, of which she is so proud, is ruined at least for a time, the tormentor replaces the ladder, and sends his cruel mistress's maid up to relieve her. With infinite difficulty they led her down, physicians were sent for, who with a great deal of pain and trouble to her, and not without the loss of her whole skin several times over, cured her of a violent fever and of other accidents attending it. From that time Helena forgot her lover, and was more careful for the future both in choosing a friend and in seeking amusement. The scholar also, hearing what had happened to the girl, thought he had had full revenge, and so no more was said about it. Boccaccio closes with a passage that is curiously

illustrative of the temper of the times towards Humanism, and also very significant of the value which the Humanists had, at this early date, already begun to put upon themselves. 'Thus,' he says, 'the foolish lady was served for her wit and mockery, thinking to make a jest of a scholar, as if he had been a common person, never considering that most of them—I do not say all—have the devil, as they say, in a string. Then take care, ladies, how you play your tricks, but especially upon scholars.'

In Boccaccio's hands the uncompromising cruelty of the cheated lover's revenge commends itself to the reader's sense of poetic justice. The tale is merely one of two coarse pleasantries, and yet out of it there rises an exaltation of physical and mental suffering, and an exquisite poignancy of situation, under which the whole story glows with a strange beauty, and it is precisely as the material is informed by the new spirit that this marvellous result is attained. It is a thing of which the Middle Ages were incapable. Their stories abounded in coarse jokes and cudgellings enough, but it was the Humanistic spirit, that could see things in themselves essentially coarse and exalt them to a fine issue. In the end we trace the larger tolerance of the times, that readiness to accept things as they are, which was part of the true Renaissance temper. The lady and the scholar are quits; well, then, no more is said about it—the incident is closed. This view is not at all infrequent in Boccaccio. The most notorious instance is possibly that delightfully funny but utterly scandalous story of the two deceived husbands, who prefer discreet silence to further scandal.

It is a debonair, smiling and entirely worldly figure that looks out at us from the genial pages of Boccaccio. There is no need to class him among the moralists, but if he allows himself licence he cannot, on the other hand, be classed among the deliberate corrupters of youth. His charm is twofold, and arises from his handling of mediæval material in a classical manner. He is one of the earliest writers to blend the classical and the romantic, and few have done it with more perfect artistry. It is unlikely that he did so deliberately. The material lay to his hand in the French Fabliaux; the tendencies of the age, which were shaping him towards the Humanistic ideal, supplied the other factors. But more interesting still is the circumstance that gives the *Decameron* its deep and

abiding influence. What has won for it a permanent hold on the imagination of mankind is the fact that it exalts love into the central motive of all its pieces. As an eminent French critic has remarked, 'the central idea is that of love, represented as the chief motive force in social life, and the sovereign of the world.' Whatever may be the incidental objections to Boccaccio's masterpiece, it is his representation of this sovereignty of love that has secured his place for all time. His poetry has its place in the development of Italian literature, his scholarship was a necessary link in the chain of Humanism, but in that consummate interweaving of luxury, passion, humour, pathos and cruelty, which form the texture of the *Decameron*, he touches us nearly. He helped Italian poetry; he achieved a prose style which has never been surpassed; he was the pioneer of modern Greek scholarship; but these things are only contributory to his burning exposition of a higher humanity than Humanism—the exaltation of human passion. Upon Boccaccio's masterpiece might very well be inscribed the motto from the brooch of Madame Eglantyne: *Omnia vincit amor.*

CHAPTER IX

THE RISE OF THE DESPOTS

We have already outlined the political condition of Italy just before and at the beginning of the Renaissance. It is necessary, however, to say something more particularly about the change that took place in the city states and turned them from Free Communes to Tyrannies. In Dante's earlier days Free Communalism was in its glory, but before his death the process of disintegration was already apparent. It came about by slow and insidious steps. Not one of the city states escaped this usurpation of freedom, but it was an evil not without compensation, for the despotism, cruel as it was in too many cases, made nevertheless, if not for the promotion of humanity, at any rate for the promotion of the Humanities. While every smaller state was gradually warped into the hands of a tyrant, there were four great examples which are most important to the present discussion. It is with these that we shall deal, contenting ourselves with the bare mention of the others. The four cities are Milan, Florence, Rome and Naples. Venice stands apart, and will have to be considered separately; although she too set up her own form of tyranny, it differed considerably from that of the others. It was no grasping of power by a single family; the forms of the republic remained intact, however much the spirit may have been violated.

In dealing with this question of the Tyranny we must bear in mind one thing—that through the rule of the tyrant the ancient Free Commune was transformed into the modern state. The first example of this process is found in Milan. During the early portion of the fourteenth century Milan had extended her power beyond her walls, and had drawn into association with herself a great number of city states and signories throughout Lombardy. The Milanese dominion threatened to become a thing formless and void; out of

the welter arose the great family of the Visconti. In 1378 Bernardo Visconti was at variance with his nephew, Gian Galeazzo. The latter conquered, threw his uncle and his uncle's family into a dungeon to perish, and then set himself to the reorganisation of the state.

No soldier but a man of deep cunning, Gian Galeazzo shut himself up in Pavia, and, employing the best captains and diplomatists of the age, he began subtly to weave a net of diplomacy, the meshes of which were to extend to the furthest corners of Italy. It is curious that the imagination of his time, so fertile in flashing metaphors, did not nickname Gian Galeazzo the Spider. His policy was to set defendant against defendant—to stand aside and watch them fight—and, lastly, to step in and seize the spoil. In time he had ruined all the petty rulers of Lombardy. He made alliances just as his policy directed him. Of fealty he did not know the name. To-day with this princeling, to-morrow with that; the next day with the first again, if he were alive. So Gian Galeazzo worked and schemed, until at length, from the ruins of crumbling principalities and lordships, he had fashioned the Duchy of Milan. Genoa, Bologna and Tuscany next fell under his sway, and he dreamed even of a kingdom of Italy, united under his own hand. His death, however, in 1402 put an end to his plans. Gian Galeazzo must be ranked among the great geniuses of statecraft. Although he sat at home, he was yet a man of action. Without going out to war, he conducted wars to a successful issue, and at the same time he reorganised the state. Although his military operations made heavy taxation a first necessity, he was no bad ruler, as times went. Justice was well administered and industrial prosperity increased under his rule. He converted the Free Assemblies into councils of administration and police. Over every city the duke set an officer called the Podesta, whom he himself elected. The Commune was no longer a state, but, in the modern sense, an organ of administration, a Collegio or Council of men in authority in the capital—the prototype of the modern Cabinet. The duke surrounded himself with literati and artists, he initiated great public works, among which are the two noblest monuments in Lombardy—Milan Cathedral and the Certosa of Pavia. He revived the Pavian University, and stands forth as the first of modern

princes. Under his rule mediæval institutions entirely disappeared, and the unity of the New State was established.[1]

But when the hand of Gian Galeazzo was removed this fabric of his immediately began to fall to pieces. The work of restoration was undertaken by his son, Filipo Maria, whom Villari calls a degenerate copy of his father. He was a timid creature, who lived in continual fear of assassination, surrounded himself with spies, and never left his castle of Milan. He was like his father in this, that he played off his mercenary captains one against the other in order to serve his own ends. Always at war, yet never defeating, he owed his victory to craft and treachery. Although vanquished in the field, he could wriggle out of the consequences of defeat by sheer force of cunning. He was able to restore his father's work and to hold it to the day of his death. But with him ended the Visconti. Filipo Maria had no lawful successor, but a man far bolder than himself, who had long watched his opportunity, was now ready to step into his place. This was Francesco Sforza, who in 1444 had married Visconti's only daughter, Bianca. In the change to the rule of the Sforza, we see the transition from government by an aristocratic house of great tradition to that of the mere adventurer. Francesco Sforza was a man of no family. His father, Muzio, had been little more than a brigand chief. His sword had been at any man's disposal from the time when, in early boyhood, he was kidnapped by a roving band, and very soon rose to be captain of a company. It was his personal daring that won him the name of Sforza. He was a typical free-lance of the period, carried away by the passion of the moment, equal to any treachery if he could but serve his immediate end. Of the sacredness of the truce he took no heed, and even murdered Ottobuoni III. of Parma in the very act of parley. He took service with Joanna II. of Naples, at whose court his life was one long romantic vicissitude. He was up to-day, down to-morrow, and up again, with higher office, the day after. For a man so resourceful his end was pitiful: he was drowned while fording a stream. Such was the father of Francesco. The son inherited and enhanced old Muzio's daring character. A free-lance of free-lances, he was desired of every potentate in Italy. We find him now on this side, now on that, but always with his eye

[1] Villari, *Machiavelli*, Introduction, chap. ii.

on the Duchy of Milan. After the death of Filipo Maria, Milan passed through a crisis. Its subject cities rebelled, the Milanese themselves declared a republic, but they could not agree as to policy. To make matters worse, Venice, the ancient enemy of Milan, threatened to attack her. Into this sea of trouble came Sforza with an offer of deliverance. He crushed the internal dissentients, he brought back subject cities to their allegiance, and he re-established all the machinery of an orderly state, and naturally he installed himself as Filipo Maria's successor. This greatest of the free captains was not the man to endure rivals. During his earlier career several other adventurers had made a great name for themselves in Italy. The chief of these were Jacopo Piccinini and Carmagnola, for whose sword many princes had contended. When Francesco made himself master of Milan, Piccinini alone remained of those desperadoes. He was now resting quietly at Milan, and on his desire to visit the court of Naples, Sforza encouraged him heartily to do so. From that visit he did not return alive. Ferrante of Aragon received the old free-lance with open arms, and immediately threw him into a dungeon. No one believed Sforza's well-feigned indignation at this act of treachery, and there can be little doubt that he was glad of an accident or design that rid him of a powerful adversary.

Burckhardt calls Francesco Sforza a man after the heart of the fifteenth century.[1] He was for all his unscrupulousness an enlightened ruler; for all his astuteness and foxy, selfish statecraft, he could be generous and even pitiful. He set the Duchy of Milan on a firm basis; he had a regard for letters, although by no means a lettered man himself. He encouraged Greek exiles and Italian scholars, among whom Filelfo is the most noticeable. Filelfo followed the fashion of the times by celebrating his patron in an epic, 'The Sforza.' Under Francesco justice flourished. His public works were more notable than those of any prince of his day. As regards intellectual culture, his daughter Ippolita caught the new passion for learning, and wrote Latin discourses, which were greatly admired by her contemporaries. Whatever Francesco attempted, that he carried to success, but, nevertheless, he remains outside the first rank of rulers. It is true he moulded a heterogeneous collection of materials

[1] Burckhardt, *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy*, vol. i.

POPE JULIUS II., BY RAPHAEL

This portrait from the Uffizi Gallery, Florence, presents the war-like Giuliano della Rovere, Pope Julius II., the most munificent Papal patron of Renaissance Art. It is worthy of a place beside Velasquèz's immortal portrait of Pope Innocent X. Replicas are to be found at the Pitti Palace and at the National Gallery.

into an ordered state, but it was a state in which the will of the people bore no part, where all went well while the despot was benevolent, but as soon as the power passed into the hands of a merely selfish knave all its excellences evaporated.

Such a knave was Francesco's son, the infamous Galeazzo Maria, whose name is written large upon the page of Italian cruelties. He practised every private abomination, he spent himself in the invention of ingenious tortures. Wherever he went ruin and desolation followed him. He brought woe upon noble houses, and then exposed his victims to public insult. Under Galeazzo Maria, any semblance of liberty that the people might have retained swiftly became a thing of naught. But he wrought for inevitable retribution; since the days of Hipparchus there has always been some Harmodius and Aristogeiton. The end of Galeazzo is not unlike that of the Athenian tyrant, and the story is equally romantic. It touches very closely the new classical spirit that had grown up in the great Italian cities even under the hand of ruthless despots. The Harmodius and Aristogeiton of Milan were two young scholars, Girolamo Olgiati and Gian Andrea Lampugnani, both pupils of Nicolo Montano. Their study of classical history had made them devout enthusiasts for liberty and very good haters of tyranny. To them they joined Carlo Visconti, who was of like mind with themselves. His grudge was on the score of family usurpation, theirs on the ground of family shame, wrought by Galeazzo's profligacy. They resolved that the tyrant must die, and went about their project with a cool deliberation mingled curiously with a scholarly pose. At the same time that they practised the use of the dagger they sought inspiration in the pages of Sallust and Tacitus. At length, on the 26th of December 1476, all was ready. Olgiati went to the Church of St. Ambrose, and throwing himself at the saint's feet, prayed for success in his enterprise. Then, on a later day, the three conspirators attended divine service at the Church of St. Stephen, where they recited a Latin prayer, specially composed by Visconti—so extraordinarily did the sense of ritual consecrate in the minds of these young men the deed that they were about to commit. Visconti's prayer ran as follows :—'Fashion Thou our high-hearted enterprise, and be not wrathful if we must presently stain Thine Altars with blood, that so we may free the world of a monster.'

Thereupon they fell on the duke, and despatched him. A riot ensued, in which Visconti and Lampugnani fell. Olgiati was captured, and was broken on the wheel, but torture could not break his spirit. As he lay shattered and awaiting the last mercy of the headsman, he gave a strange expression to the mingled Paganism and Catholicism that informed his spirit, for even as he called to his aid the divine Manes of departed Romans, he commended his soul to the Virgin. Here we have typical Renaissance psychology. But he went further. Until his last breath he continued to compose Latin epigrams, and not even his agony could dull his appreciation of any that seemed to him more deftly turned. Being exhorted to repent, he said that had he to die ten times over amid such tortures, ten times over would he cheerfully consecrate his blood to such a deed. Had he known the famous Scholion of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, it is hardly probable that he would have forborne to repeat it. Just before the fatal stroke he uttered an exhortation to himself to remain steadfast, and ended with a terse aphorism: 'Collige te Hieronyme stabit vetus memoria facti,' and then he added: 'Mors acerba, fama perpetua,' and died. The whole situation has been admirably summed up by Villari in the following sentence:—'Here we see that while all political feeling was extinguished in the people, there were a few individuals in whom Christian and profane sentiments, love of liberty and ferocious personal hatred, heroic resignation and unquenchable thirst for blood, vengeance and glory, were all mingled in the strangest way. Ruins of old systems and remains of various civilisations were confused in the Italian mind while the germ was budding of a new individual and social force which had as yet no well-defined programme.'

Thus fell Galeazzo Maria amid a welter of passions that the policy of his house had, by its devious, contradictory, benevolent and perverse methods, brought into being. The later history of the House of Sforza and the fortunes of the Duchy of Milan are bound up with the name of that turbulent buffoon, Ludovico Il Moro, Louis the Moor, who was to throw all Italy into confusion, and to present Florence with several problems of high polity. It is to Florence that we have now to look for the further history of Italian despotism. The evolution or involution of Florence from a Free Commune to a Tyranny proceeded on quite other lines from

that of Milan, and in the end the resulting Tyranny was very different from the warlike grasp of the Visconti and the Sforza. True, the fair city on the Arno did not escape her share of bloodshed, but those who were afterwards to be her tyrants were men rather of the pen than of the sword, and the tumults that distracted Florence and sacrificed her best citizens were entirely those of party. From the time when the Free Communes began to break up, Florence was never at rest. She passed through a bewildering series of political changes, and saw in turn every municipal institution known to the Middle Ages. In an earlier time she had known a similar change, but throughout these purely mediæval revolutions the general tendency had made steadily for the cause of the people and the destruction of feudalism. But the very causes that established her as a city of traders, with Giano della Bella's Ordinamenti della Justizia in 1493—the culmination of a long process—were exactly those which favoured the resulting tyranny, for it was not under the hands of free captains that Florence ultimately fell, but under those of a family which had risen to eminence by commercial speculation. It was long supposed, erroneously, that this family's origin in the apothecary's craft had given them no more warlike cognisance than three pills on a field azure, and that those three *palle* became in after days the familiar sign that advertises in the streets of London those temples where household gods can be hypothecated.

Florence as a city of traders was gradually divided into two classes—the wholesale and retail dealers. From the clash of their interests arose new political parties. From the common interests of commerce beyond the walls arose questions of public policy that determined the wars of the states. Pisa was a tempting, an indispensable outlet towards the sea. Therefore on Pisa Florence made a war of conquest. Siena was the key of the great trade-route to Rome—therefore with Siena there were quarrels and a struggle for Florentine supremacy. Within the city, apart from the two great classes of wholesale and retail traders, every art and craft formed its own guild, which in time grew wealthy and powerful as a city company in London to-day. These guilds were separated into the major and the minor, and the major assumed the guardianship of foreign policy. Thereby they secured themselves in some-

thing of an aristocratic position which, while the city was facing a common enemy, aroused no jealousies, but during intervals of peace was fiercely attacked by the factions of the minor guilds, who had at their back the dregs of the people, wasted by conflict and impoverished by taxation. During the same period there were frequent wars with Milan, and when these came to an end the minor guilds asserted themselves still more earnestly upon the internal politics of the city, and gave that opening for the entry of a dominating power which was gradually seized and used by the family of the Medici.

Although traders, they were no upstarts. In the last quarter of the fourteenth century, Salvestro de' Medici, a member of one of the greater guilds, evidenced the political sagacity of his house by recognising in the agitations of the lesser guilds the way to personal success. He spurred on the weaker party to overthrow the more aristocratic, and although his policy was in its essence selfish, the mere fact that it was speciously popular endeared him to the majority of the citizens. Later, another Medici, Vieri, a quiet money-making man, followed consistently popular aims, and although involved in no great movement or factitious upheaval, stood in such a position of potential authority as to earn this character from Machiavelli: 'Had Vieri been more ambitious than good, he might have made himself master of the city.' At this time, if there were a ruling family, it was the Albizzi, and Giovanni, who is really the first of the Medici to practise real statecraft, began to seek definite means of reducing their importance. The fight was for the most part constitutional. The Albizzi worked against the Medici party by exile, confiscations and imprisonments, but these stringent measures seemed only to strengthen the enemy, whose numbers perpetually increased. The Albizzi sought consistently to weaken the lesser guilds, but they found their match in Giovanni, who played his game with financial counters. He threatened the wealthier guilds with a measure that is in some sense a forecast of the methods of our own vexatious income tax, for he proposed and carried the Catasto, by which every citizen's possessions had to be ascertained and verified by public registration. This, while it conveniently exposed the means of the wealthy, acted, on the other hand, as a protection to the poor, for the wealthy

guilds could no longer, as formerly, tax the less fortunate as they pleased. Such a measure inevitably brought Giovanni de' Medici a still larger share of popularity. At the same time, of course, it made for his own aggrandisement, but never did an ambitious family more cleverly cast dust in the eyes of a people whom they favoured only to enslave.

The son of Giovanni was the better known Cosimo, of whom we have spoken elsewhere as a patron of learning. Of him and of his more famous grandson, Lorenzo the Magnificent, it will be necessary to write at length under a separate heading, for they stand out as types of a most curious tendency. Here we shall speak of him merely as a great factor in Florentine politics. Outwardly he assumed no semblance of the statesman. He was devoted to his counting-house. His chief business seemed to be merely to increase the wealth of his family, but, under the cloak of commerce, he played most subtly for political power. Although a keen man of business, he was no niggard. All those who were in financial distress knew that there was accommodation at the bank of the Medici. For a short time the jealousy of the Albizzi contrived to foment a popular tumult that drove him into exile, but the tide soon turned, and he was recalled from his place of refuge, Venice, whither he had retired with the air of a man who has been ill-treated by those whom he has benefited. His policy went down with the Venetians, who received him as though he had been an exiled prince. There were many in Florence who knew what they owed him, and it was they who stirred up the revolt against the Albizzi and brought Cosimo home in triumph. Thereupon he became for a moment the man of action. He allowed his party to use the sword sparingly; the rest he achieved by sentences of banishment. From that moment he was undisputed master of Florence without assuming any outward rank or power. Quietly and unobtrusively he consolidated his rule, effecting reforms for the most part by constitutional means, although occasionally, with the judicious hand of a physician, he let a little blood. Certain persons who threatened to become too powerful came to an unfortunate end. The Gonfaloniere, Baldaccio, for instance, was one day flung through the window of the palace of the signoria, and although the deed could never be brought home to Cosimo, there was a general suspicion that he did not

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disapprove. But still his general policy proceeded on the lines of what were called 'gentle methods' as well in home as in foreign politics, for Cosimo had no narrow eye on Florence alone. Tomaso Parentucelli, that eminent scholar, had much in common with the banker, whose recreation was Plato, and when fortune brought Tomaso to Peter's Chair, the wily banker improved the occasion. All the finances of the Roman Curia were entrusted to the Medici bank in Rome. Such revenues reinforcing the family fortunes made the Medici the greatest man in Italy. He looked northward also as well as south; he had seen very early in the career of Francesco Sforza the possibilities of that great free captain; he made haste to gain his friendship; and so in process of time all feuds with the Lombardic capital were composed, and Florence and Milan stood together in a long alliance. Never had Italy seen a mere civilian achieve so much for a state by merely civil means.

Under Cosimo, Florence enjoyed prosperity and just administration. Arts and letters flourished, and the city became the centre, the type, the crown and flower of the Renaissance, not only in its intellectual but in its political aspect. After his death the Florentines, using the title of Roman Emperors, hailed their banker-ruler as Pater Patriae. But like everything else in that strange time, it was a paradox. It was the triumph of the citizen, it was the welfare of the citizen, but it was the death and destruction of civic liberty and of popular institutions. During his last years it is true, when age and infirmity had weakened his grasp of affairs, Cosimo was no longer able to hold the balance so truly as before. Too impetuous partisans once more raised the banner of party strife. From time to time tumult and bloodshed filled the streets, and the partisans of the Medici began to slay and exile their enemies unsparingly. During the brief and weak rule of Cosimo's invalid son Piero things went from bad to worse, but on Piero's death a still brighter era arose for Florence as a state and as a centre of intellectual power, for Piero's son Lorenzo, now twenty-one years old, took up the great rôle of his ancestors with an equipment such as none of these could possibly possess, but which his grandfather's sagacity and innate love of culture had made it possible for him to receive.[1]

The tyranny that had been virtual and secret in Cosimo was

[1] For Lorenzo's character in detail see p. 186.

actual and avowed in Lorenzo. Although he assumed no title, he was in all respects a prince. In dealing with men and with rival states as clever a statesman as his grandfather, he forgot the true basis of the family power. That a man who was so much the artist should be deficient as a financier is in no way surprising—it is, in fact, natural—and therein Lorenzo failed. The counting-house knew him not; he did not know how to lend wisely. His personal expenses were enormous. He did not care by what means he increased his revenue. It is impossible that in the Florence of the time there should not have been some able merchant who could have acted as finance minister to Lorenzo, but he would brook no interference from any man, while he interfered ruthlessly in every man's matters.

Disaster was inevitable. The Florence of Lorenzo, gay with continual fêtes, and musical as some scene from an opera, could yet change its aspect vastly at the breath of party faction. From the festival to the massacre was never more than a step in that city where the keenest life went ever hand in hand with death. The people had begun to recognise what the splendour of Lorenzo really masked. Murmuring rose to conspiracy, and conspiracy found sanction at the Vatican, where Sixtus IV. now reigned, and was for the time no friend to the Medicean tyrant. The 26th of April 1468 was a day ever memorable in Florentine annals. It was a Church festival. In the cathedral was assembled a great concourse; among the worshippers conspirators, many of them of the foremost rank, stood ready to strike. The movement took its name from the Pazzi, who were the chief instigators. The elevation of the Host was the signal for the outbreak. At that moment daggers flashed out, and Giuliano de' Medici fell, covered with many wounds. Lorenzo drew his sword, defended himself, and escaped, but as usual the populace rallied to the side of the threatened tyrant, just as the Milanese had turned upon the murderers of Galeazzo Maria. The people fell upon the conspirators, stabbing right and left. Some whom they caught they hanged, and a row of corpses dangled from the windows of the Palazzo Vecchio. Francesco Pazzi and Archbishop Salviati, at the moment before they were flung over, were indulging in bitter recriminations, and had they not been bound would have fallen upon one another. Even the tightening of the rope as they went

down did not quench their enmity. They hung so near that they gripped each other with their teeth, and so died in a horrid grapple of hate—a spectacle after the heart of the Florentine populace. Lorenzo withdrew to Naples, where Ferdinand of Aragon was being persuaded by the Pope to crush the Medicean power, but Lorenzo took the bull by the horns, and persuaded Ferdinand that he had better keep Florence as his friend. That, he assured the king, was far more possible from a Florence united under one ruler than from a republican Florence perpetually torn by factions. And so the wily Medici had his way. Ferdinand saw the point, agreed, and Lorenzo came back to a peaceful and welcoming city. It is possible that Lorenzo learned much from the Pazzi affair, for thereafter there can be traced in his rule a greater similarity to the policy of his grandfather. He had seen that if he was to control the republic he must apparently respect it. Yet his constitutional changes insidiously undermined the popular liberties. Two years after the Pazzi affair he abolished the Balia, a council elected every five years, and instituted the Council of Seventy. It seemed as though so large a council must make for a wider representation of democracy, but that was in no way the case. The Seventy renewed itself from within, and all its members were sworn partisans of the Medici family. With this act, Florentine liberty was finally extinguished.

At Rome, during the same period, a similar political change took place, but just as the change in Florence differed from that in Milan, so the method of the change in Rome was distinct from that of either of the two former. At the opening of the epoch with which we are dealing, the Papacy, which had pretended to universal sovereignty, received a rude shock in the political troubles that occasioned the long exile of the Popes at Avignon. The Papal resources were thrown into confusion, but through it all the occupants of the See of Peter desired a substitute for their lost universal empire, a stronghold of temporal possessions. This desire, however, was for a time postponed. It was not until the reign of Alexander VI. that the Papacy lost sight entirely of its sacred pretensions, and became the most worldly, the most selfish and the most shameless of all earthly principalities. During the exile, or Babylonish captivity as it was called, the political power of Rome gradually fell into the hands of three families—the Orsini,

the Colonna and the Prefetti—all possessed of immense estates and great wealth. They maintained their own men-at-arms and a most complete warlike equipment. They behaved like independent sovereigns, they coined money, they appointed officials, they quarrelled bitterly among themselves. Under their factitious rule the Papal authority was gradually extinguished. The Pope had also claimed the overlordship of many other towns throughout Italy, but during the exile several of these, such as Bologna, Urbino, Faenza and Ancona, had become independent lordships, and when under Innocent VI., some ten years before the exile came to an end, the Papacy began to lift up its head again and to take active measures to re-establish its own supremacy, Cardinal D'Albornoz was commissioned to carry on a war of subjugation. This subjugation succeeded, but it was only nominal. The overlords of the towns were nominated vicars of the Church. The republics had to take an oath of obedience to the Holy See, but no change was made in their laws. The only symbol of their servitude was a castle, held in the Pope's name, and erected, since the subjugation, to hold the city in terror. This policy was held by Popes Urban VI. and Gregory XI., but the great schism which followed the exile delayed the day of strong Papal government by some thirty years. It was from 1417, when the Council of Constance had put an end to the schism by electing Oddo Colonna to the Papal Chair under the title of Martin V., that the real beginnings of the temporal power can be traced. Gradually the Popes ceased to concern themselves with religion, and devoted all their energies to statecraft. They had become, in fact, tyrants, exactly like those who held sway in the other Italian cities.

The task before them, however, was different, and the means by which they accomplished it different also. In the other cities we have seen the work of enslavement carried on by men in their prime, who had the best years of their life still in store, but with the Popes it was otherwise. They usually came to the See of Peter at a very advanced age, and they found themselves surrounded by a powerful and turbulent nobility. To strengthen themselves accordingly they gathered about them their nephews, upon whom they bestowed wealth and offices, and thus originated the great scandal of the Church known as 'Nepotism.' The first of the worldly Popes, Martin V., although he followed a policy of temporal aggrandisement,

was neither an irreligious nor a profligate man, but he found himself faced with a terrible problem. However worldly the Church might become, it was necessary to maintain at least the forms of religion and the prestige of the Holy See. Shorn of all spiritual force, the Church could only maintain its authority by the exercise of brute force, and herein lay the germ of that corruption which afterwards reached its height in the life and reign of Alexander VI.

Martin V. on his arrival from Constance found Rome practically in ruins. The populace was beggared, and cowered under the hand of the nobles, whose lofty towers frowned above the dwellings of the meaner citizens. To this day the remains of these fortresses still thrust themselves, like the bones of some primeval monster, through the architecture of modern Rome. They are the symbols of a tyranny that later fell before the stronger tyranny of the Vatican. For while in the other cities of Italy we see one, or at the most two, families seizing the supreme power, in Rome we see the despotism of great houses finally absorbed, crushed and superseded by a tyranny of which the Pope himself was the head. Martin V. turned Rome into an administrative municipality. He crushed rebellion in the surrounding smaller states, he took order with the robber nobles of the Campagna. For his own kinsmen, the Colonna, he secured fat benefices and arranged wealthy marriages. To some extent he rescued Rome from her ruins, he made a show of order and government, and in part he deserved his epitaph, which described him as 'the happiness of his age.'

Martin did something to rescue Rome from misery, but his was no beneficent rule. He was no friend to liberty, and his policy was purely selfish, but he was a political not a private sinner—a fine distinction, which the age was beginning to recognise, and one which, before another hundred years were out, was to be philosophically explained and even vindicated by the pen of Machiavelli. It is interesting to trace how, as Pope succeeded Pope through this memorable age, the private jealousies of the families that had formerly contended for the Roman power influenced the policy of the Holy See. Martin V. died in 1431. He was succeeded by Eugene IV., a partisan of the Orsini. His alliance with that house stirred up the Colonna, and three years after his election Eugene had to flee from Rome. He was, in fact, stoned

out of the city. He fled to Florence, and sent Cardinal Vitelleschi to subdue the Eternal City. The cardinal did his work with atrocious thoroughness. He exterminated the Prefetti, he made away with many of the Colonna, he sent several of the Savelli to the block. Once more poverty settled down upon the streets of Rome and upon the Campagna, where citizens wandered destitute, and even offered to sell themselves for slaves. So terrible had Vitelleschi's power become that the Pope grew jealous of him and sent Cardinal Scarampo to succeed him. Vitelleschi offered resistance, was taken, and died of his wounds in the castle of St. Angelo. The feud ended, Eugene returned, but he held the Papal Chair for only three years longer.

While these horrors were taking place in Rome, Eugene had passed the time pleasantly at Florence, where the famous council had assembled to discuss a possible union between the Eastern and the Western Church. Eugene enjoyed public festivals, and the society of the learned, which he affected without being himself any very great scholar, but the presence of the Greek representative from the Orthodox Church made it necessary for him to employ interpreters. The Secretariat of the Roman Curia called for men of learning as it had never called before, and the peculiar exigencies of the time supplied the very men. One of the most distinguished of these we have already seen in Tomaso Parentucelli, who succeeded Eugene as Nicholas v.; but, curiously enough, although it was knowledge of Greek that threw the Papal Secretariat open to men like Parentucelli, he himself was no Grecian, though a perfectly accomplished Latinist, and it was to her Latinists first of all that the Holy See was indebted for a great extension of power throughout Europe. Nicholas longed to convert Rome into a vast centre of learning. His collectors brought valuable manuscripts from every quarter. He founded the Vatican Library, and set about the rebuilding of Rome, which he hoped would eclipse Florence in splendour. He made roads, built fortresses and erected churches and monasteries. It was a new Rome that he left when he died in 1455. For a moment, although Nicholas's work all made for the aggrandisement of the Papacy, the hand of mere shameless cupidity had been stayed. It regained its force, however, when Calixtus, the earlier of the Borgia Popes, succeeded Parentucelli.

He it was who showed for the first time to what shameless lengths the scandal of nepotism could go. He held the chair for only three years, and on his death the nephews whom he had enriched were hounded out of Rome by the mob.

Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, Pius II., was elected in 1458. A native of Siena, he favoured for the most part his relations and friends in that city. Although he was an accomplished and learned man, he was no patron of scholars. Privately, however, he devoted himself to literature. His works are voluminous, and he was one of the pioneers of educational theory. He also left an extraordinary collection of notes, made, during his travels, upon the countries he had passed through. He had an almost childish belief in the efficacy of Latin, and thought he would convert the Sultan Mohammed II. merely by the expedient of sending him an elegant Latin letter. Otherwise, however, his means with the Turk were not so gentle, for he wasted his life and substance in feverish enthusiasm for a crusade which he forced upon an unwilling Italy. When at length he managed to concentrate a sorry force at Ancona, and went there to bless it on its departure for the east, he found it decimated with sickness. Of the fleets that he had been promised, only a few stray galleys arrived from Venice. Then the pious Aeneas knew that the game was lost—fever struck him, and, with his eyes wistfully turned eastward, he died, still pathetically urging the pursuance of his vain crusade. The character of Pius was slight—he had no great aim, he left no enduring monument, learning made no noteworthy advance under his Pontificate. His own works are of minor consideration. He did something to restore religion, and he hoped by a crusade to fan to flame the ashes of enthusiasm. But his Pontificate, like his life, ended in failure. Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini was a bubble. There is a certain beautiful iridescence about his character and about his reign, but it was all unsubstantial.

The outward appearance has led some writers to exalt Aeneas and his Pontificate into something of legendary splendour, and it cannot be denied that in some way this Pope contrived to make such an impression on the minds of his contemporaries, but when we attempt to lay our finger upon something enduring in his work, everything that he did becomes an elusive quantity. There is no coming to grips on any vital point with Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini. Yet he

had a strange sagacity, that wasted itself in aphorisms, of which Platina has given us an extraordinary string. One of them even shows a certain foresight that makes it curious reading amid the rationalism of a later day. It was his pronouncement that the Christian religion is credible for its own sake and entirely independent of miracles. In political administration he had some success, and even restored order in Rome. Pius was succeeded by Paul II., who, while entirely given up to the pleasures of this life, made some sort of show of governing his See. He repressed crimes of violence, he fought the Malatesta of Rimini, and he made his influence felt against the freebooting nobles of the Campagna. His persecution of the Roman Academy and the parlous state to which he reduced the men of learning is one of the ugliest blots in his career. Aeneas, although he withheld his patronage from scholars, admirably sustained the new tendencies of his age, but Paul is that extraordinary anomaly—a Renaissance Pope, who stretched professors of the new learning upon the rack. He was cynical as well as cruel, and deliberately corrupted the people by debauching them with public festivities. His reign prepared the way for the three blackest reigns in the annals of the Papacy, those of Sixtus IV., Innocent VIII. and Alexander VI. The first, on exchanging the habit of a Genoese friar for the tiara and the pallium, showed himself an unscrupulous tyrant, whose nepotism amounted almost to madness. He it was who, as we have seen, favoured the conspiracy of the Pazzi, which led to his war on Florence. At the same time he made war on Ferrara, and threw the whole of Italy into confusion. His sole object in attacking any neighbouring state was to secure some prize of wealth or territory which he might hand over to one of his kinsmen. The name of Sixtus became a byword for treachery, and it was said that so dear was warfare to his nature that he died of the pains of peace.

After his death the Papacy was virtually put up to auction, and was purchased by Cardinal Cibo, who took the name of Innocent VIII. His reign is one long record of hideous corruption. The Pope's own life was notoriously scandalous, and of this he made no secret. For the convenient name 'nephew' was now openly substituted the word 'son.' Malefactors could compound in money for any crime, and so much was this the case, and so delightfully

profane the wit of the court, that a chamberlain could say, 'The Lord desireth not the death of a sinner, but his life and his purse.' While the Pope lived in indulgence, his sons and relatives turned Rome into an open sink of iniquity. Murder was so common in the streets as to pass almost unnoticed. The loose living and high play of the cardinals was open to all beholders. For nineteen years Innocent continued to disgrace the Papacy, and serious-minded men thought at his death that surely they had seen the worst. But the crimes and scandals of Innocent VIII. shrink to comparative insignificance before those of his successor—the greatest of the Borgia Popes—Alexander VI. With the details of his career we shall deal in a separate chapter on the House of Borgia, and it is unnecessary in this place to say more than that under him the Papacy reached its culminating point of abominable tyranny. The other Italian despots may have been shameless and unscrupulous men, but when the Papacy assumed the rôle of tyrant it played it with a thoroughness and an iniquity that would have been remarkable enough in itself, but is rendered doubly infamous by its grotesque parody of the sacred office of Supreme Pontiff. Apart from all its graces of art and learning, the Renaissance has come to stand also as a symbol of the most unspeakable profligacy, and for the highest or the lowest expression of that aspect of the age, for that completeness of villainy which has stamped itself on the memory of man as peculiar to the Renaissance, we look to the opulent, the brutal and the strangely sentimental viciousness of Pope Alexander VI.

The influence of the corrupt Papacy reacted upon the neighbouring Kingdom of Naples, where Charles I. of Anjou had by his misgovernment driven the people to rebellion. In order to maintain his position he had to trust to the barons, who consequently grew powerful, and tore the country to pieces. These turbulent nobles were in their turn marked down by the Pope for spoil. When they wanted territory for a kinsman they would stir up strife with some baron who had grown apparently too powerful, and would send a pretender to usurp it. The Popes then settled any trouble they had aroused by confiscating the lands, under the specious pretence of vindicating their own claim to overlordship. Under such a regime the Kingdom of Naples gradually fell to pieces. At length Queen Joanna, who had suffered from the usual tender mercies of Papal

policy—for Martin v. had crowned her in 1419, only to call in Louis III. of Anjou to dispute her rights—turned in her extremity to Alfonso of Aragon, and proclaimed him her successor. Suddenly, however, Joanna changed her policy, and nominated René of Lorraine, between whom and Alfonso a fierce struggle ensued. The war lasted until 1432, when Alfonso made his triumphant entry into Naples, where he founded the Aragonese dynasty. Although a foreigner, Alfonso shortly acclimatised himself, and became the typical Italian prince.

His superb patronage of learning will be discussed in the section dealing with the Neapolitan Academy. Self-indulgent, easy, but fond of splendour, and with a facile wit that gave him at least the reputation of a learned man, Alfonso was hailed as a mighty ruler by the obsequious scribes whom he encouraged, and he was by them entitled 'Alfonso the Magnanimous.' He managed to pacify Naples, but only by carrying fire and sword through a land that he afterwards drained by ruinous taxation. Although his court was splendid, the common people remained miserable, and Alfonso's so-called magnanimity made for no secure achievement in the work of government. On his death in 1458, he left his possessions in Naples to his natural son, Ferdinand. His Spanish, Sardinian and Sicilian possessions he left to his brother.

Ferdinand had hardly come to the throne when he found himself involved in the old toils. Calixtus IV. had his eye upon Naples. He declared the Aragonese line extinct, and claimed the kingdom as a fief of the Church. Ferdinand found himself in the unfortunate position of having to conquer his own territory. He was harried on all sides. The Angevin barons were up. There was revolution in Calabria: René of Lorraine, mindful of his defeat by Alfonso, was making an effort to recover the kingdom promised him by Joanna. Ferdinand fought his battle with ruthless cruelty. He admitted no obstacle, he conjoined treachery with violence, he would caress and entertain an enemy, and immediately thereafter consign him to the scaffold. His courage and ability were undoubted, but his vices were fatal to his success as a ruler. Gradually he undermined his own powers. His ministers were among the most accomplished men of the day, but he used them merely as the instruments of oppression. He cared nothing for those who should come after him, he sought only to seize as much as he could for

himself. His heir, Alfonso, who had all his father's vices and none of his abilities, entirely alienated the people. The result was a conspiracy which flamed into open revolt. Behind this conspiracy stood Innocent VIII., who egged on the barons to bring about a revolt in Naples that threatened to develop into a general war of the Italian states. Ferdinand managed to make peace and to punish his enemies, but he had almost reached the end of his tether, and a foreign invader, the first of a long succession, was now threatening the Italian shores. Charles VIII. of France was preparing for that onset which brought him in triumphal progress from the north to the south of Italy. Ferdinand, who had no lack of political insight, saw what was in store for his country, and warned all the neighbouring states of the impending calamities, but nothing was done to avoid the French invasion. Ferdinand did not live to see the end. His foolish son, Ferdinand II., sought aid from every quarter, and did not scruple to ask even the Turk for assistance, but he was overwhelmed at Monte San Giovanni. His great general, Trivulzio, deserted him, and Naples, weary of the Aragonese rule, finally rose in revolt. Even the members of the Academy, who owed all that they were to Alfonso the Magnanimous, were so weary of the existing state of things that Sanazzaro welcomed the conqueror in flattering terms. Ferdinand fled to Vecchia and then to Messina, and Charles entered Naples on 22nd February 1496.

Charles's victory, however, was brief, and the hopes of the more enlightened citizens came to naught. The French rule was at least as bad as that which had gone before, and the king's deputy ruthlessly sold even the most faithful supporters of the French. The weakness of Charles's position enabled Ferdinand, with the help of Gonsalvo de Cordova, to recapture Naples, and for a time the country was rid of foreigners. But the security was quite unreal. Ferdinand had hardly taken possession of his kingdom again before he died. He was succeeded by his son Frederick, who was entirely in the hands of Spain. The way was being paved gradually for the final conquest of Italy under Charles V. That event will fall to be chronicled in its own place, and marks the end of the period with which we are here concerned, for with the Sack of Rome the Italian Renaissance comes to an end. The last years of the epoch were crowded. They saw first the end of the purely Humanistic movement, which

LORENZO DE' MEDICI, BY VASARI

Uffizi Gallery, Florence

Photo Anderson

was succeeded by a sudden revival of native Italian literature, but with the coming of Charles, the new spirit that was animating the world no longer found a congenial home in Italy. Its work had to be carried on in Germany, the Netherlands, in France, and in England. Its manifestation in Spain is something which stands entirely apart from the rest of Europe.

CHAPTER X

THE VENETIAN REPUBLIC

FROM the tumultuous movements outlined in the previous chapter, Venice stands to a great extent apart. It is true she touches them at many vital points, and that her fortunes are inseparable from the fortunes of Italy, but through it all she holds a certain aloofness that is characteristic, not only of her public but of her private policy. In her constitution itself she offered a wide contrast to the other Italian states. In the mere form of her government she remains almost unchanged throughout her entire history, and although she did not escape the tyrannising tendency of the age, she did not, as it were, fall into the hands of any despotic family or of any single tyrant. By subtle modifications that always preserved the outward forms of her original government, it was the state itself that became the tyrant. There is a marvellous impersonality in the superb pride and ruthlessness of that overwhelming entity—the Venetian State. How it impressed itself upon the general mind of Europe can be caught nowhere better than in the closing lines of Othello :—

> 'Myself will straight aboard; and to the state
> This heavy act with heavy heart relate.'

Shakespeare with his infallible insight caught the tone of the Venetian official in whose mind the Commonwealth was always the paramount authority. It was to no person or persons, but to the impersonal majesty of Venice, that the terrible story of her governor in Cyprus should be told. And once again, to pass from the essential truth of fiction to the literal truth of history, we see the aged Doge, Foscari, saying to his son, convicted of treachery and imploring pardon, 'Go, obey the will of thy country, and seek for naught else.' Even when the Doge became a despot, as he did in the end, he was always the representative of the abstract Commonwealth.

Originally a colony of refugees, who had fled from the Barbarians,

Venice formed herself without regard to existing political conditions in Europe. Feudalism touched her scarcely at all, she stood outside the influence of the Empire. Her aristocracy was from the first an aristocracy of wealth. Her great merchants became almost at once her princes. She held but little traffic with the mainland of Italy, but extended her commerce throughout the Mediterranean until at length she held the gorgeous East in fee. It was by distant commercial enterprise that she lived; it was by her colonial system that she escaped the troubles incident to the growing powers of aristocracy, for her ambitious and wealthy men found an outlet for their energies in the government of distant possessions. They did not sit at home, asking themselves how they might enslave and despoil the common people. In its main features, her form of government was fixed very early in the history of Venice. The Doge, who was popularly elected, held his seat for life. Under him was the Grand Council, of which membership became hereditary, and on this basis the republic stood secure for centuries. At first there was a sort of parliament or popular assembly to which grave questions could be referred, but as the influence of the aristocracy grew this was abolished, and power vested more and more in the council itself, with a consequent narrowing of the Doge's authority.

It did not follow that membership of an old family implied the coveted seat on the council, and as that body became more and more exclusive, families of distinction, finding themselves outside the governing circle, stirred up the populace to revolt. But the government was already too strong to be resisted, and the rising of the year 1310 brought after it a heavy punishment—the institution of that terrible Council of Ten, which, proceeding by secret and summary, yet always constitutional, methods, could put any rebel to death. Not even the Vehmgericht itself had a more dreaded name in Europe than had the Council of Ten. It was the permanent defence of the aristocratic principle, now gradually merging itself into a tyrannic oligarchy. The state stood firm, and advanced her enterprise in the East, where she had shattered her two principal trade-rivals, Genoa and Pisa; the latter had never recovered from the battle of Malloria in 1254. The end of the fourteenth century saw Venice the supreme maritime power of Europe. At that point, however, she began to look towards the mainland of Italy and

to interfere in the quarrels of state with state. Her prosperity had aroused the jealousy of the new despotic rulers, whose rising power threatened her trade-routes to the west. Venice had become the great Exchange of Europe, she stood midway between west and east, and her trade could only thrive if it had free passage both ways. She stood in need of new markets, and, to complicate the situation, the smooth routine of her eastern traffic was now threatened by the advance of the Turk. Her policy was to get into her power the city states of northern Italy, to leave them nominally free, with their laws and institutions intact, but under the control of a Venetian rector for civil affairs, and a captain for military. Thus she held as outposts Padua, Friuli, Istria, Vicenza, Verona, and Treviso.

The Venetian rule was not in itself a hardship, for the cities which she had taken under her protection enjoyed the advantages of stable government and a share in Venetian commerce. None the less, the rule of Venice was a terrible one—her tyranny extended over many smaller states just as in the other Italian cities it was a tyranny of one man over weaker men. But in those tyrants of the other states, and in the nobles of the cities she had subdued, Venice had enemies who were only awaiting their opportunity. Her position, though apparently one of growing power, was complicated by insidious perils. The Turk was drawing nearer, and Venice gallantly undertook the defence of Christendom, of which she believed herself the bulwark. At first this added care seemed only to strengthen her hands, for island after island of the Grecian Archipelago flung itself upon her protection, and so added to her markets and to the number of her loyal citizens. But she had too many irons in the fire. This was foreseen on his death-bed by the Doge, Mocenigo, who entreated his councillors to abstain from war and conquests, and above all not to elect Francis Foscari in his place. Too well he knew the fiery and chivalrous recklessness that would lead Foscari to imperil the prosperity of the state for an idea. Foscari, however, was elected, and soon showed how truly Mocenigo had estimated his character.

Florence, fighting at desperate odds against Filipo Maria Visconti, appealed to Venice for aid. The Doge made haste to grant her request; he could not stand aside, he said, from a people struggling for liberty. He would go to the world's end to their aid, and so he plunged Venice into a civil war that lasted for one-and-

twenty years. It was an imbroglio in which the whole of northern Italy was involved. The great free-lance, Carmagnola, had sold his sword for the time being to the Venetians, but he was suspected of treachery, and so, with a gag in his mouth and his hands bound behind him, he was led between the pillars of the Piazzetta, and there beheaded. In the same place suffered the last of the Carrara, once the ruling family of Padua, who had tried to recover his dominions, and who had persuaded Ostasio da Polenta of Ravenna to desert the cause of Venice. The result of this conspiracy was the addition of Ravenna to the Venetian territory. This war with Milan ended only with Visconti's death, and six years later the fall of Constantinople into the hands of the Turk gave Venice her death-blow.

Not that she fell in a year or even in a century, for she had still a long and even prosperous career before her, but her prestige was never the same, despite the treaty with the Turks that secured her commerce, while within she gradually decayed by a subtle process of corruption. The old solidarity of the government was undermined by faction and intrigue. Freed from wars for a time, Foscari's enemies assailed him with persecution, and at length the man, who may have been rash in plunging his country into hostilities, but who was nevertheless her supremely gallant and chivalrous defender, was formally deposed by the men whom he had loyally served. Foscari died of a broken heart, and with him died the last of the great Venetians. For forty years longer Venice continued to oppose the Turk, but always with weakened resources and weakening power. Little by little she was stripped of her colonial empire, and at length she was forced into a peace. At the same time she had all Italy against her—if not actually opposing her in arms, then certainly with abuse in their councils. She continued, it is true, to extend her territory by snatching now this, now that, isolated position. But here was no real addition to her strength, for every one of these minor conquests only added to the general hatred that Italy entertained against her. Her government was still strong, and as times went, just beyond the average, but its force was narrowed almost to insignificance. Her sway, which next to ancient Rome had been the widest of the Old World, was further narrowed by the discovery of the New.

The expansion of the New World outlook was against Venice. It is

true she produced a marvellous art, and she fostered above all cities in Italy the growth of printing, but in the great intellectual movements of the age she bears only a subsidiary part. She was fast becoming an anachronism. With the death of Foscari, the old virtue had gone out of her. She remained ghost-like among her islands and lagoons, the mere shadow of a past greatness. Yet she was not quickly impoverished, and her citizens had still the means of luxury. In luxury, carried to excess, we trace the origin of a new canker, for with excess came corruption that grew and spread until at length, in the eighteenth century, Venice had become the by-word of Europe for all that was frivolous and immoral. But even in the age under discussion, the ostentation and the greed of the patrician women had incurred the censure of contemporary writers. Her men, it was said, were better, but avarice and a narrow egotism prevented them from attaining any useful or permanent policy. With the rest of Italy they were out of sympathy; they looked upon its internal struggles with something akin to pleasure, for they thought that Italy's weakness would be their opportunity for seizing the supreme power.

But such an opportunity was never to be given to the Venetians. Instead, they found themselves confronted with a formidable coalition, in which not Italy alone, but France and Germany were arrayed against them to check their projects of aggrandisement. Venice still struggled gallantly, for her spirit was not broken, but the signing of the League of Cambray was for her the writing on the wall. She, while faithful to the ideal of the state, had in the person of that state played the tyrant among other states, and nothing could save her from the tyrant's inevitable downfall. Of the Italian despotisms, Venice is the last and the most curious. Most fascinating in her impersonality, she stands apart from the feverish struggles of the other states, for a time royally victorious, the champion of Christendom, the mighty trafficker of east and west, the sage counsellor that revealed once more to the world the almost forgotten principles of a colonial Imperialism. Under the semblance of a republic she was a monarchy, but a monarchy in the abstract. Her Doge might be a man of towering personality, but the state was a greater person still. She was, however, born a merchant, and in taking the sword against

her neighbour states in Italy she took the first step towards her downfall. There was in Florence a merchant who understood by conciliatory acts of commerce how to make himself a king. Had Venice followed in her statecraft a policy similar to that of Cosimo de' Medici, she might have realised her ambition of becoming Mistress of Italy.

CHAPTER XI

THE PROGRESS OF HUMANISM

In order to obtain a just view of the great impulse towards letters, art, philosophy, and general culture that was ultimately to produce the modern world, it is necessary to divest the mind of the idea that this movement was in any sense cataclysmic. There is no sudden cleavage between the age of the Renaissance and the so-called Dark Ages. It was a popular error, now sufficiently disposed of, that the revival of learning was a direct and sudden consequence of the fall of Constantinople and the flight into Italy of men skilled in Greek learning. These scholars were certainly the means of awakening a new and more vital interest in Hellenic culture, but they were merely the providential instruments in fostering a spirit that was already clamouring for expression. Even in the darkest ages Greek letters had not been wholly forgotten. The learning that the monasteries kept alive was, it is true, principally that of the Latin classics, but even in the time of St. Augustine that scholar devoted himself to the teaching of Plato. Especially in the Benedictine monasteries the light of classical knowledge was kept burning, and in the Irish religious houses Greek studies flourished. About the year 668 A.D., Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, introduced some knowledge of Greek, and classical learning generally was fostered by St. Jerome at Bethlehem. From the twelfth century onwards there was a new stirring in the mind of man—a growing desire of light, of which the first large result was the Scholastic Philosophy, but this was in its essence barren. It was the victim of authority. Speculation was held to be an impiety, and no philosophy was tolerated that could not be reconciled to the dogmatic teaching of the Church.

Scholasticism was not permitted to enlarge its narrow borders. The great doctors, such as John Scotus Erigena, Duns Scotus, and St. Thomas Aquinas, could not build broadly, and they were therefore

compelled to build high, rearing fantastic structures of empty speculation and theory, and ending finally in absurdities. Yet, for all its barrenness, there were men and institutions in the pre-Renaissance period whose zeal for pure scholarship, although their opportunities were limited, was not unworthy of the spirit of the Renaissance itself. In this respect the Abbeys of Tours, Rheims, St. Gallen, and Corvey were especially distinguished. Rabbinas Mauras, Abbot of Fulda, liberalised monastic studies as early as 856, and his pupil Lupus Servatus was thoroughly well read in good Latin authors. Gilbert, afterwards Pope Silvanus II., who died in 1003, had in him the true spirit of Latin literature, and was a precursor of that awakening to style which is of the essence of the Renaissance scholarship. There was another important element that served to vitalise the new movement, the awakening of a feeling for the past greatness of Rome, and a desire to realise once more, and if possible to recreate in the state and in individual life, the glories of an earlier time.

In the second half of the thirteenth century there were signs of the coming change. One of the most notable is the fact that Dante, who, although in his thought and in such Latin scholarship as he possessed, remaining to the end the bondman of scholasticism, chose as his guide through the first portion of his great vision the poet Virgil, whom he hails as his master. It is true that this choice may have sprung from a sentiment not wholly that of classical enthusiasm in a strict Renaissance sense; for it must be remembered that while Virgil had never lost his hold upon the mind of the Middle Ages, it was not as the poet of Rome that he was held in awe and honour. A strange superstition, springing probably from the supposed prophetic mission of Virgil's fourth eclogue, which in the ages of faith was believed to be prophetic of the Messiah, had invested the poet with supernatural and necromantic attributes. 'Master Virgil,' as he was called, was looked upon less as the master of poetry than as the master of magic. A tremendous body of fantastic legend, that forms a special Virgilian literature, had grown up around the memory of the Mantuan. He was the great wonder-worker—he could compel the Powers of Darkness. A new series of legends ascribed to him strange miracles. In the dim fancy of the time he was still alive, vague hopes were entertained of his

return. It is not, therefore, surprising that when Dante sought to descend into the shades, and to call forth the spirits of the departed, he should have chosen as his guide and counsellor the shadowy figure who was above all for the Middle Ages the representative of necromancy. Alone in the infernal regions Dante would have been powerless. Certain shapes, it is true, presented themselves to him of their own accord, but at every turn he had to practise evocations, as occult art understands the word, and for this task none was more fitted than Virgil. Again and again the great Roman poet instructs the great Italian after what manner he shall commune with the spirits in prison. In not a few instances, but for Virgil's counselling words, those with whom Dante desired to speak must have remained dumb.

But while Dante's choice of Virgil as a tutor sprang in the first instance from this less enlightened impulse, the new spirit towards the ancient learning was all the time glimmering within him. He was never to give it full expression, his work was to be something greater—the shaping of the Italian language. But the tendency is there, and the poet of modern Italy who stands next to him in genius and reputation was about to make the movement articulate. The age was ready to produce an enthusiast for classical learning who was to stand forth as the first modern man. When Dante was forty-one, there was born in exile at Arezzo, Francis Petrarch, whose life of seventy years was to see the full awakening of the Renaissance spirit in Italy. While it is erroneous, as we have said, to imagine any sharp cleavage between the mediæval and the modern, the transition was sufficiently rapid to be apparent to the more discerning minds of that epoch, and it is curiously significant that Petrarch himself noted the change. He was sufficiently self-confident of his mission and of his work to speak of himself as 'a link between the old order and the new.' In the first of his *Memorable Things* he says: 'I am set as it were on the confines of two peoples, looking at the same time backwards as well as forwards.'

Apart from all questions of scholarly or poetic achievement, his mere outlook on life is that of the modern man. This is exemplified by a curious side issue. Petrarch was the first mountaineer, or rather Alpinist. To the mind of the Middle Ages, the peaks and the great silences were things of terror. That man should find pleasure in scaling mountains was a thing unthinkable, but to

Petrarch it suggested a new and venturous delight. During his long residence near Avignon, the windy slopes of Mont Ventoux called to him. In company with a friend he made the ascent. It was an extraordinarily toilsome adventure, for the pioneers were nowise in training, as we should say, but Petrarch held on, conquered the peak, and was rewarded for his fatigue by a new vision. By that effort, as well as by his studies, he enlarged the horizon of mankind.

Great as was Petrarch's contribution to the new learning of which he is rightly called the father, the larger and the better half of it was denied to him. His work was wholly in Latin (we are not speaking at the moment of his Italian poetry, on which his greatest fame rests), for he knew no Greek. Several attempts he made to learn it under the tuition of wandering scholars from the East, but he made no progress, and Hellenic studies remained to him a wistful aspiration to the end. He used to hold the text of Homer reverently in his hand, longing that he might read it in the original. His friend Boccaccio, who marks a further advance towards the new Humanism, made him a Latin translation of Homer, and this he annotated diligently. The glory of Greek was not revealed to Petrarch, but his services to the new learning were incaloulable. We have noted his search for manuscripts and his encouragement of those who sought for them. Coins and inscriptions he collected, and he was moved by the sight of the ruins of Rome to make some elementary studies in classical archæology. From his earliest student days he was passionately attached to Latin manuscripts, and Latin in its literary sense was a serious rival to the study of law, for which his father had destined him. The two books, one a copy of *Virgil* and the other the *Rhetoric of Cicero*, which his tears rescued from his father's wrath, were destined to become the principal text-books of the revival of learning, and Petrarch called them the 'two eyes of his discourse.' In his attitude to Virgil we find him once again the Modern. The feigned supernatural attributes of the older poets had for Petrarch no significance. He sees that the *Aeneid* may be allegorical, but it is rather an allegory of Imperial Rome than a parable of the spiritual world. For Petrarch, Virgil the man lived, as a representative of that Augustan age which Petrarch himself worshipped. This attitude is a proof of that awakening to style

and to the splendours of the Roman world to which we have already referred. Petrarch, indeed, may be regarded as a microcosm of the awakening Renaissance spirit. To Petrarch the *Aeneid* became the only model for epic poetry. His own ambition was epic.

Strangely enough, he thought lightly of his Italian poems, which are rightly held to be the greatest part of his achievements. It was by epic verse that he sought to win immortality. Faithfully moulding his Latin style on that of Virgil, he produced with extraordinary care, and by labours that extended over many years, his Latin epic *Africa*, in celebration of the deeds of Scipio Africanus. To-day, as we have pointed out elsewhere, that work is dead, and is looked at only by curious scholars. The poet Petrarch lives in his Italian song to the memory of Laura, but he lives no less as a Humanist, for he brought his scholarship to bear with unwearied diligence upon the texts of the Latin authors whom he knew. He was the first to amend the text corrupted by an age-long succession of monastic scribes. He was the first to elucidate the ancient authors by critical notes of any value. He restored the proper appreciation of Horace, whom he set next to Virgil. The Middle Ages had neglected Horace the lyric poet. It was Petrarch who brought mankind back to a right appreciation of Horace's more characteristic work. He was keenly alive to the harmonies and rhythm of Cicero's prose, although in this he was not without precursors, for the author of *Stabat Mater* had already mentioned the melody of Cicero; but it was the genius of Petrarch that first gave currency to the right understanding of the Ciceronian style. The Middle Ages indeed were singularly dead to the feeling of absolute literary beauty. It was what a man said rather than his manner of saying it that concerned the schoolmen. The New Age was to rush in time to the other extreme, as we shall see when we come to treat of the Decadence, when beauty of expression was passing into corruption.

The work begun by Petrarch and Boccaccio was carried on at some distance of time by Gian Francesco Poggio Bracciolini, otherwise known as Poggio Fiorentino. Although never personally in contact with Petrarch—he was not born until six years after Petrarch's death—he became in his enthusiasm for the recovery of the ancient classics as noteworthy a pioneer as the poet of

Vaucluse. The eager curiosity that drew Petrarch from place to place, ever seeking new treasures, and that caused him to devote his income to the employment of other searchers, was extended in Poggio, who also developed that other side of Petrarch's service to learning—the critical examination and emendation of the newly discovered texts, corrupted and deformed by generations of ignorant copyists. Poggio was a native of Terra Nuova in the Florentine country, and to Florence he owed his education. He studied under John of Ravenna, and learned Greek from Manuel Chrysoloras. In his early life he earned his bread by acting as a copyist for the booksellers of Florence. His eminence in the ancient tongues brought him under the notice of Coluccio Salutati, the papal secretary, and also of the venerable Florentine scholar, Niccolo de' Niccoli, an enthusiast as keen as Poggio himself, and one who worked along similar lines.

The post which Poggio had obtained under the Roman Curia he held for fifty years, and during the whole of that time he combined with his official duties an enthusiastic study of the classics, and a wide and assiduous correspondence with the most eminent literary men of his day. Although a servant of the Church, he refused to take orders. It was his service of the Church, however, that enabled him by a fortunate accident to make his most valuable discoveries. He went in official attendance on the Pope to the Council of Constance, and while there he had, owing to the delays of business, a very large amount of leisure on his hands. Always scenting hidden treasures, he made excursions to the monasteries around the city, and explored the neglected libraries of Reichenau, Weingarten, and St. Gallen.

After the work of discovery had been completed, the attention of the discoverers was naturally turned to the state of the texts they had found. We have seen how Petrarch made some beginnings in criticism, and how Poggio raised it to the level of a fine art. The papal secretary, however, did not stand alone, for even before he had come to his fullest activity there had begun at Florence a definite movement for the care of the monuments of the new learning. It was a work involving time and great expense—a work that obviously called for a wealthy patron. The three outstanding names of those who were first to encourage this work are Cosimo de' Medici of

Florence, Alfonso the Magnanimous at Naples, and Pope Nicholas v. in Rome. The most important centre was Florence, and the names that are associated with Poggio in the arrangement and translation of the classics are Ambrogio Traversari, Leonardo Bruni, Carlo Marsuppini, Giannozzo Manetti, and Francesco Sacchetti. The six last named occupy a peculiarly interesting position, as they are the trustees of the first modern public library. That institution was founded at Florence by the bequest of Niccolo de' Niccoli, a scholar who claims particular attention. So great was this man's devotion to his favourite pursuit, that he spent all that he had on the acquisition of manuscripts and on maintaining scholars to examine, edit, and translate them. It was fortunate for him that the virtual, though not the nominal, Prince of Florence, that hard-headed old man of business, Cosimo de' Medici, was also a classical enthusiast. This man, who was, during the period in question, gradually concentrating the business interests of Florence in his own hands, and was drawing every rival into a financial net that was at last to close upon him to his ruin, had yet a strange vein of generosity in things which the present business age, with Mr. Andrew Carnegie at its head, has denounced as utterly impracticable. When Niccolo had ruined himself by his praiseworthy extravagance, Cosimo immediately gave him unlimited credit at the Medici bank, and an order was given to the clerks to cash for Messer Niccolo de' Niccoli, at sight, cheques for any sum he might care to demand. It is to Niccolo rather than to his patron that we have to look for the first formation of that ideal of cultured life which Cosimo's more famous grandson, Lorenzo, was afterwards to carry to such a pitch of luxury and elegance.

The grandfather, for all his sympathy with letters, remained to the end a plain man, but the scholar whom his means supported was in all his habits and appointments the man of ease and taste. His habits were fastidious, and his daintiness at table was remarkable in the Florence of that age, which had not yet risen to the conception of refinement and delicate bearing to be set forth at a later day in the *Courtier* of Baldassare Castiglione. It is curious to remark in this connection that at the period when the newly rich found an opportunity of forcing themselves into Florentine society, there sprang up strange little books of etiquette, which in their prohibitory passages give no very pleasing picture of the general

state of manners in Italy of that day. But in the house of Niccolo de' Niccoli things were far otherwise. His table, at which he constantly received distinguished guests, was always spread with the whitest and the finest linen. Already the craze of the collector had touched him, and nothing pleased him better than to use at his table some exquisite vase or dish of true ancient Roman workmanship.

Under his roof he maintained promising young men, who acted as secretaries and as copyists, and he increased his library, not only by research but by the duplication of fair corrected copies. On his death in 1437, he bequeathed his whole library to a body of trustees. The manuscripts numbered eight hundred, which for the state of the times was a thing remarkable in itself, although to us it does not seem very formidable. The value was six thousand golden florins. Cosimo de' Medici, as trustee, saw his opportunity of not only doing a public service to Florence, but of putting right that long overdraft of Niccolo's. He proposed to cancel the overdraft in exchange for the right to deal with the library as he pleased. His fellow-trustees agreed, and accordingly, in the new hall of the Convent of San Marco, four hundred of the precious manuscripts were placed, and lest their devoted collector should be forgotten, each one was marked with the Latin inscription, 'From the estate of the most learned Niccolo de' Niccoli of Florence.' The work of cataloguing the first public library was entrusted to a very able hand, that of Tomaso Parentuccelli, who afterwards, as Pope Nicholas v., gave to the new learning a greater encouragement than it had ever received from the Papal See. In Nicholas, indeed, the habit of the librarian became inveterate, and it is to him that the library of the Vatican owes its origin. His Florentine Catalogue was supplemented by a list of works necessary for its completion, and the list served as a guide to the founders of other great libraries throughout Italy. The remaining four hundred volumes Cosimo retained, partly for his own use and partly to be given away as gifts to his friends. Over the nucleus of the San Marco library he watched with jealous care, and lost no opportunity of adding to the collection.

Nor did his energies cease with Florence. When he had completed the new Convent of Fiesole, his first care was to provide it also with a library. Regarding the project, he consulted

the chronicler Vespasiano da Bisticci, to whom we owe some of the liveliest and most intimate accounts of the transactions and the social intercourse of Renaissance scholars. He tells how Cosimo came to him, and asked how the library should be formed. Vespasiano recommended the very sensible plan of making copies rather than the expensive method of searching for further hidden manuscripts. Cosimo agreed, and again gave a blank cheque for the expenses of the work. Vespasiano immediately engaged forty-five copyists, who, in a little under two years, produced two hundred volumes according to the list of desiderata supplied by Pope Nicholas v. These two great collections are now in the Laurentian library at Florence, and remain the most important monument of a movement that, no less than the return of attention to the ancient classics, was vitally contributory to the revival of learning.

During Niccolo's lifetime, four of his associates joined with him in an informal society that has been named Cosimo's Literary Oligarchy. They were Leonardo Bruni, Marsuppini, Manetti, and Traversari, whom we have already seen among the trustees of Niccolo's bequest.

Leonardo Bruni, better known as Leonardo Aretino, for he was a native of Arezzo, owed his inspiration to Petrarch's portrait, upon which as a boy he used to gaze reverently, longing that he too might attain to the poet's eminence as a scholar. He was poor, and had for a while to support himself by the law, but some Latin publications of his brought him under the notice of Poggio's patron, Salutati, who placed him in the papal secretariat. He left the service of the Holy See to return to Florence as Chancellor of the Republic, a post which he held from 1427 to 1443. In this connection we note incidentally the most important influence exercised by those devotees to the new learning who were officially attached to the Holy See. They turned the writing of the state documents from the bald task of a hack scrivener to the art of the polished man of letters, with momentous results, for their documents went broadcast over Europe, and still further quickened the awakening appreciation of style. But for the present we are concerned rather with Bruni the Florentine chancellor, than with Bruni the papal secretary. His works attained a great popularity, and his person inspired veneration. When he moved abroad in the customary red robes

THE MADONNA OF THE OLIVES, BY GIROLAMO DAI LIBRI

Verona

Photo Anderson

of the Florentine burgher, the robe worn by Dante and by Niccolo, he was followed by an admiring train of scholars, among whom were to be found many foreigners. He is the first historian of Florence, and his work brought him the freedom of the city, and exemption for himself and for his children from civic taxation. He was the first of that long procession of chroniclers of which the most outstanding names are the Villani and Machiavelli, who have left minute and vivid pictures of the life of Florence at the most thrilling period of her history. The first are chroniclers: in Machiavelli we see the earliest beginnings of modern philosophic history. Leonardo wrote also a continuation of Livy, a history of the Gothic invasion of Italy, lives of Cicero and Aristotle, commentaries on his own times, and letters innumerable. More important still, he translated assiduously from the Greek, and so furthered the knowledge of a literature that was still less widely studied than that of ancient Rome. As was natural, the study of Latin was far more freely taken up in the early days of the Renaissance than that of Greek, for to the Italian there was always a certain familiarity in the Latin tongue, whereas the Greek, by its unfamiliarity, offered obstacles even to those who were most desirous to acquire it.

We have already seen how Petrarch longed to be able to read Homer, but could never make any progress in Greek studies. But Leonardo Aretino's translations, which attained a popularity even greater than his Latin works, were copied and circulated everywhere, and so stimulated the curiosity of the learned to go to the fountain-head. His work was based on real erudition, and was carried through with critical acumen. He is the first really competent interpreter of Aristotle, and he left valuable translations of Plato's *Phœdo*, *Crito*, the *Apology*, the *Phœdrus*, the *Gorgias*, the *Epistles*, certain *Lives of Plutarch*, and two orations of *Demosthenes*. Nor did these exhaust his labours. He gave the first place to Latin composition, but he did not altogether disdain Italian, and has left lives of Dante and of Petrarch in that tongue. When he died Florence mourned him sincerely, and gave him a public funeral after the manner of the age. Upon his breast was laid a copy of his *Florentine History*. He was crowned with laurel, and his city gave her great scholar a stately tomb in Santa Croce.

Leonardo is the first scholar whose merely critical, apart from original, work raised him to the highest esteem. That he should have won such acknowledgment is significant of the temper of the times. The first wave of enthusiasm for the discovery of the Old World had passed. There was in that earlier fire something of the *omne ignotum pro magnifico* spirit from which it is impossible altogether to separate Petrarch's wistful yearning toward the text of Homer. But the men of letters were now fired by a new zeal to understand with thoroughness and accuracy the great gift that had been placed in their hands, the marvellous legacy of antiquity. Criticism must always mean the death of the highest originality, and so it was to prove for the classical scholarship of the Renaissance; but it had a great work to do in the first instance, and the veneration which followed Messer Leonardo Aretino to the tomb is sufficient proof that Florence had awakened not merely to a passion for unknown beautiful manuscripts, but to a real and honest desire to know what they contained, and to clear them from the corruption of centuries of neglect. In this critical enthusiasm we can trace the germs of the modern scientific spirit.

Poggio and Bruni were accomplished Latinists, even before they had extended their studies in the older tongue; but before they reached manhood they, and many others of their contemporaries, had also been deeply attracted by the charm, then first breaking upon the western world, of Hellenic culture. Thirty years before Poggio's birth there was born in Constantinople a Greek who, afterwards an exile in Italy, was to bring back the knowledge of Hellenic literature to the western world. This was Manuel Chrysoloras, who was born at Constantinople somewhere about the year 1350. In 1391 he was sent by the Emperor of the East, John Paleologus, to ask the aid of Italy against the Turk. He stayed for a short time in Venice, but found little encouragement there. Florence was, however, more alive than the Queen of the Adriatic to awakening culture. The fame of Chrysoloras, as that of the most eloquent and most learned Grecian of his time, travelled before him to Florence, and called forth an immediate response. Two noble Florentines, Roberto de' Rossi and Angelo da Scarparia, went to Venice to visit him, and when the embassy of Paleologus proved futile, and Chrysoloras returned to the East, he was accompanied by

Scarparia, while Rossi went back to Florence, deeply impressed by the wisdom and the learning of the master from Byzantium.

Immediately Strozzi, the head of a wealthy house, and Niccolo de' Niccoli determined that Chrysoloras should be brought to Florence. By their influence they persuaded the Signory to appoint Chrysoloras to the Greek chair in the university, at a salary of one hundred and fifty golden florins. The appointment was the most vital thing in the history of Hellenic scholarship. From 1397, when he settled in Florence, Chrysoloras carried on his work with unremitting enthusiasm, lecturing also at Rome, Padua, Milan, and Venice. He was present at the Council of Constance, in attendance on John XXIII., and before the council rose he died in the Swiss city, in 1415.

He raised up a race of pupils to carry on his work, not a few of whom came to the first rank. Among these were Poggio, Bruni, Guarino of Verona, Francesco Filelfo, and even Niccolo de' Niccoli himself, who was not too old to enrol himself as a pupil. From Chrysoloras all modern Greek scholarship dates. He had contemporaries who, although they have not the fame of the actual first beginner, reached to higher things in mere accomplishment. We must probably make some allowances for the wonder that invests the learning of Chrysoloras. After all, he came early in the age of discovery. The texts to which he had access were few and faulty. There were no Manuals or Aids to Instruction, the teacher had to be Grammar, Lexicon, and Exposition in one. But however short, in certain particulars, Chrysoloras might have appeared before an examining board for classical honours to-day, he inspired an enthusiasm for Greek study that burned clearly in Europe until the last quarter of a century, when the onset of utilitarian ideas threatened it with an extinction which seems only too sure.

Side by side with Chrysoloras stood another teacher, who, his junior by five years, outlived him by forty, and carried the good cause of Greek learning in Italy many steps forward. If Chrysoloras was picturesque and even romantic, Georgios Gemistos, better known as Pletho, outrivalled him in these qualities. A Byzantine by birth and a noble, he was a student of philosophy at a Mussulman school of learning. Already a sceptic as regards

Christianity, Gemistos plunged deeply into the wisdom of the East, and after leaving the schools, he was appointed to a Magistracy in the Peloponnese. With the administration of the law he combined the profession of philosophy, and meanwhile he viewed the social and religious condition of his fellow-countrymen with a pessimistic eye. Like the rest of his class, who, whatever the virtue of their services to humanity, were nevertheless men of an intolerable arrogance, Gemistos, who believed sincerely in no religion but who had studied all, had the conceit to believe that he could compound a cure that would save eastern Europe from decadence and anarchy. He formulated his doctrine in a book called the *The Laws*, a work metaphysical, psychological, religious, political, and ethical. Into the details of his system it is unnecessary to enter. He set up a theocracy consisting of one supreme God, whose attributes were more or less those of Zeus Olympios, and surrounded him with pale imitations of the rest of the Olympians, graded in rank, and with certain mystic attributes, in some ways symbolical of their mythological character. The whole scheme was Neoplatonic, or at least an approximation to Neoplatonism, an attempt to combine a system of logic with the picturesque fantasies of the Greek mythology. It is of small significance in the real life-work of Gemistos, except that, as Symonds says, it has some value as an illustration of the intellectual conditions of the earlier Renaissance. Practical religion was not. The Church was a political rather than a spiritual organisation. Science had barely come to birth, but 'Art and Literature, invigorated by the passion for antiquity, absorbed the genius of the Italian, and through a dim, æsthetic haze, the waning lights of Hellas mingled with the dayspring of the modern world.'

As in the case of Manuel Chrysoloras forty years before, it was the Emperor John Paleologus who, without knowledge or intention of what he was doing for Europe, was the means of bringing Gemistos with his message to the shores of Italy. The philosopher was a persuasive person, outwardly orthodox, no bigot, a fluid experimenter with faiths, a ready adjuster of beliefs to suit occasions. Who then was better fitted to accompany Paleologus to Italy to that council at Florence which was summoned for the purpose of uniting if possible the Eastern and Western Church? Gemistos

was by no means keen for the task the Emperor had laid upon him; he even tried to persuade Paleologus not to attend the council. He had no great love for Christianity, still less did he like the Roman form of it, but for all this it may have embarrassed him somewhat to find that his many qualifications had got him elected as one of the six champions of the Eastern Church. Yet when the worst came to the worst he attended the council with good enough heart, and was quite ready, in the characteristic Greek manner, for any encounter that would involve subtle dialectic.

But Florence had other work for Gemistos. Her savants were seeking for an acquaintance with the Greek philosophers, and with Plato in particular. The Platonic philosophy was known, if at all, only in involved and faulty translations into Latin. The Florentines sought to drink at the fountain-head. Gemistos was the very man they wanted. Grant that he was something of a quack and not a little of a charlatan, grant that his Platonic teaching was a bemused mysticism mingled with Pythagorean and Alexandrian systems, and with Heaven only knows what strange accessories drawn from eastern philosophy—grant all that, Gemistos yet remains the founder of the new interest in Plato. He had the supreme advantage not only of a golden voice and a golden teaching, as they thought, but of a most beautiful personal appearance. He was at this time eighty-four years old, and his eloquence, and the reverent persuasion of his teaching, drew all Florence after him, all Florence, that is, that had any interest in Humane learning. They called him Socrates and Plato, and the latter flattery suggested to him a Greek pun upon his own name. Gemistos means full, so too in Greek does Pletho, a word sufficiently near the name of the master for those fanciful times to adopt it. As Pletho, Gemistos is better known than by his own name. It was also characteristic of the imperfect philology of the period that so great a scholar should for one moment have tolerated the pun. We may be very certain, from contemporary analogies, that Gemistos did not know that Plato the philosopher was so called with reference to the breadth of his shoulders—his name had nothing to do with the verb 'pletho,' to be full. The mere adoption of the nickname on phonetic grounds alone seems almost impossible, but at the same time it opens up several very suggestive avenues of speculation as to the pronouncing

of Greek in the time of Gemistos. The real fruit of the philosopher's work in Florence was not so much his actual teaching as the fact that he led Cosimo de' Medici to found the Platonic Academy. The work of this body, though it is undeniably an intrinsic part of the Humanistic movement, will not be discussed in this place, as it falls more instructively into the chapter on the Academies. Gemistos brought men back to Plato, but his was not a pure Platonism. His philosophy was inextricably interwoven with mysticism, and the mystical element was never wholly wanting from the exposition of Plato throughout the whole period of the Renaissance.

In 1441 Gemistos returned to Greece, where he was accused of heresy. He died and was buried at Lystra, but his very bones were not allowed to rest, for Italy had taken him to her heart, and a great Italian had decreed that the scholar should be buried in Italian soil. Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta had the body of Gemistos exhumed, and buried it in that church, dedicated to St. Francis at Rimini, which he had raised to the memory of La Bella Isotta.

Contemporary with these men in their later years, and surviving Pletho by almost a quarter of a century, was another Greek, who, finding fortune in the bosom of the Roman Church, used his great influence for the furtherance of all scholarship, Latin as well as Greek. This was Cardinal Bessarion, a native of Trebizond, and another of those learned Greeks who had accompanied John Paleologus to Italy. Although he came as one of the champions of the Eastern Church, he saw, like the Greek he was, where the advantage lay, and went over to Rome. Eugenius IV. gave him a cardinal's hat, and later Nicholas V. appointed him Bishop of Frascati. He served as Papal Legate at Bologna for five years. We find him in Germany after the fall of Constantinople, and in 1472 he died at Ravenna. He was twice all but appointed to the Papacy, but his Greek birth and a certain suspicion of heresy, or at least of the sincerity of his conversion (for it was undeniably the offer of a cardinal's hat that brought him into the true fold), led to his rejection by the Conclave. He used his influence well, however, and spent his fortune royally in the advantages of learning.

Wandering scholars from Hellas had in Bessarion an ever kindly patron, and the passion of his life was to add to his library. When

he died he left six hundred volumes to the library of St. Mark in Venice. Among Greeks who were specially favoured by Bessarion were Theodore Gaza, who came to Italy in 1430, and was professor of Greek in Ferrara. In 1450 he settled in Rome, where he became an inmate of Bessarion's household. Another of his protégés was Andronicos Callistos, whose influence is important to the later spread of Greek learning, for he was the teacher of Politian, and afterwards he carried his knowledge into France. Another was Demetrios Chalcondylas, who came to Rome in 1547, and was professor of Greek at Perugia. Bessarion also encouraged John and Constantine Lascaris, whose names are written large in the history of the French Renaissance. Chalcondylas was another of those commanding personalities who made so strong an appeal to the young genius of Italy. One of his pupils who studied under him in Perugia, wrote to a friend a letter that has preserved for us a portrait of Chalcondylas: 'A Greek has just arrived who has begun to teach me with great pains, and I listen to his precepts with incredible pleasure, because he is Greek, because he is Athenian, and because he is Demetrios. It seems to me that in him is figured all the wisdom, all the civility and the elegance of those so famous and illustrious ancients. Only to see him is to fancy you are looking on Plato, far more when you hear him speak.'

To Gaza, Callistos, Chalcondylas, and the Lascaris is due the spread and establishment of that Greek learning which was founded in the first place by Chrysoloras, and then in a more permanent sense elaborated and given a sure foothold in Italy by Pletho, John Argyropoulos, and George Trapezuntios. Argyropoulos, born in 1416 in Constantinople, came to Italy in 1453, and taught Greek in Florence until 1471. After that date he also taught at Rome, and died there fifteen years later. Argyropoulos was another of the teachers of Politian, and what was even more important to the cause of the enlightenment of northern Europe, he was also the teacher of Reuchlin, with whom scholarship fled beyond the Alps.

Almost contemporary in age with Poggio was another Italian, Flavio Biondo, who although little touched with the rising enthusiasm for Hellenic studies, and so little a man of the Renaissance in one respect that he seemed to have no sense of style, has left an imperishable memory for his extraordinary erudition. His

ideals were those of the antiquary and of the historian; he undertook an archæological survey of the whole of Italy, not only of her monuments, but of her social and political life, and to his researches we owe a vast body of the most interesting material for history. He anticipated Gibbon in writing the story of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, and although not a scholar in the linguistic sense, he made the whole of Latin literature his own. Biondo had the topical mind. He made abstracts under subject heads of all his knowledge, and the results of his labours, carefully tabulated, may be said to place him among the first of Encyclopædists. Eugenius IV. made him a papal secretary, but few other honours or rewards came his way. The temper of the times had begun to demand from its learned men an alert mind to reason, a ready pen to write. Biondo was in no sense of the word elegant, and his generation to all intents and purposes passed him by. But the sheer mass of what he accomplished has kept his name alive, down to an age like the present, when the laborious and active collector of material for history is held in greater esteem than the facile writer, who commits the heresy of daring to be picturesque. The picturesque may have been exaggerated, but the tendency is now to dryness.

Born in the same year with Gaza, and surviving him three years, Francesco Filelfo, a native of Tolentino in the marsh of Ancona, was destined by his restless labours and his continual changes of residence to carry the new Humanism throughout the length and breadth of Italy. He was a precocious scholar, and at eighteen had made such progress in Latin that he was appointed professor at Padua, and afterwards removed to Venice, where he taught Eloquence and Modern Philosophy. Attracted towards Greek, he sailed for Constantinople in 1419, and was accompanied in his journey by Guarino of Verona and Aurispa. Their mission was not only to learn the language, but to collect manuscripts, for which the funds had been supplied by Giustiniani of Venice. After a five months' voyage they arrived at Constantinople, where Filelfo began to study under John Chrysoloras, the nephew of Manuel, whose daughter he married. He soon won honour in the eastern capital, and was favourably noticed by the Emperor Paleologus. Invited back to Venice to fill the chair of Eloquence, he returned to his native Italy after seven years' absence. He was now a master of the Greek tongue, and brought

with him a considerable library of Greek manuscripts. Proud before, Filelfo's arrogance now touched almost the ludicrous pitch. To accomplishment in Latin he had added accomplishment in Greek, and he allowed no false modesty to interfere with the pleasing task of self-advertisement. He declared without a blush that he was the only man living who had mastered the whole of both Greek and Latin literature. He claimed that he could write prose as good as Cicero's, verse equal to Horace and Virgil, that in Greek he was a Homer and a Xenophon. His hexameters, Symonds remarks, were such as Homer or Virgil would have been ashamed to own, but there is still room for a charitable view towards Filelfo. His conceit may have been unbecoming to a scholar, from whom we of the present day are accustomed to look for a becoming modesty; but we must remember that the students of those days had made an almost brain-turning discovery—they were dazzled with the riches of the new literary fields spread out before them. From the arid wastes of scholasticism they turned eagerly to grasp the new treasure. As yet, the critical faculty was only in its infancy. They had got further than Petrarch, half a century before, in the critical examination of texts, but they had not his exquisite appreciation of the sheer literary beauty of the ancients. It is small wonder that when the corrective influence of the critical faculty was as yet awanting, the new wine of Hellenism, with all that it suggested and all that it promised of beauty, of speculation, of mystical solving of the world's riddles, should have gone to the head, as it were, of the centuries. An emotional Italian, Filelfo had not the steady qualities of true genius, he was not original. Fundamentally he was coarse, but his coarseness is condoned by a real enthusiasm for the wisdom, the eloquence, and the poetry of ancient Greece.

CHAPTER XII

THE AGE OF THE ACADEMIES

AFTER the first work of the pioneer Humanist had been completed, and when the knowledge that they had brought back to the world began to spread abroad, the new movement, in what has been called its third period, manifested itself in coteries made up of students and men of cultivated leisure, who, grouped in various centres throughout Italy, promoted the cause of learning or philosophy by their corporate efforts. They formed themselves into a sort of informal university, and it is to them rather than to the actual universities that we have to look to discover a parallel with the work done at academic centres to-day. The university proper of the Renaissance was not formally incorporated. It was a 'Studium' fostered by some man of wealth and position, which attracted to it eminent wandering scholars. These would receive an appointment, often at a handsome remuneration, but there was no idea of permanency in the so-called chairs. The great man delivered his course and passed on to another city. The reason of this migratory life was not far to seek. We must remember that books were few, and that commentaries and grammars were practically non-existent. The professor had to do everything for his students. Not only did he dictate the actual text of the author under discussion, but he had to supply also a translation, a critical commentary, and an exposition of subject-matter. No manuals of mythology or of history existed. The professor, by laborious and wide reading in the classics, had been forced to discover for himself cross references that elucidated doubtful points. From minute attention to the poets he had evolved the mythology and had placed it in something like order. In a word, he was a compendium of all available knowledge. When he had communicated all that he knew to his students, it was not unnatural that he should desire to go elsewhere. He was always sure of a welcome. In Ferrara, Ercole d'Este fostered a flourishing school, of which Guarino

of Verona was the brightest ornament in pure scholarship, as Ariosto was in poetry. At Milan, the house of Sforza was equally eager to obtain the services of eminent professors; and at Naples, Alfonso of Aragon drew around him a band of students, wits, and poets, that rivalled even the intellectual coteries of Florence itself. Of Florence we have spoken in the last place, although it should have been first, for it was there that the idea of the mere school was first developed into that of the learned academy. The two things were not mutually exclusive, and they continued to exist side by side. To avoid confusion, it may be as well to remark that the Academy in the present sense was similar to that of France. It was not a university or even a teaching body. It was interested in all that made for learning, but it had no official status. It was an association, by mutual consent and inclination, of men whose business or pleasure it was to cultivate the muses. The men of pleasure were the Princes, the Sforza, the D'Este, the King of Naples, the Medici. The men who made learning their business were some of them professional teachers, some poets, some artists, and some men of letters.

Obviously the origin of the idea was the Platonic Academy of Athens, and every one of these institutions could trace their descent through Florence to the famous body of philosophers who reasoned in the groves of Academe. It was from the revival of Platonic studies that the Florentine Academy arose. Cosimo de' Medici was a devout Platonist, and, after him, his grandson Lorenzo. Cosimo formed the idea of popularising the works of Plato through an Italian translation. He accordingly set apart the boy Marsilio Ficino, who showed the most extraordinary promise of accomplishment in Greek, to be trained as the future interpreter of Plato. At eighteen Marsilio was received into the Medici household. He was delicate, sensitive, and already a mystic. It was to be his task to reconcile religion with philosophy. Of his attitude towards Christian faith and Athenian speculation, Symonds says: 'It would be unfair to class him with the paganising Humanists who sought to justify their unbelief or want of morals by the authority of the classics. Ficino remained throughout his life an earnest Christian. At the age of forty, not without serious reflection and mature resolve, he took orders, and faithfully performed the duties of his cure. Antiquity he judged by the standard of the Christian creed. If he asserted

that Socrates and Plato witnessed together with the Evangelists to the truth of Revelation, or that the same spirit inspired the laws of Moses and the Greek philosopher—this, as he conceived it, was in effect little else than extending the catena of authority backward from the Christian fathers to the sages of the ancient world.'[1]

We have made this quotation at length because it touches a central point in the work of the Florentine Academy. Speculation was in the air, and thinkers were distracted between two opinions. On the one hand they had the Christian religion, on the other they were attracted by the glories of ancient philosophy, which, by reason of its newness, was suffused with an unusual glamour. The Florentine Academy, although it owed its basis of solid study to Ficino, found its finest expression in Pico della Mirandola, who, enamoured by the romantic idea of the unity of all knowledge, and touched to a finer and more mystical issue than his contemporaries, by reason of his acquaintance with the Cabbala and the Talmud, set himself to reconcile the religions of all ages. In Pico the Renaissance found one of its most remarkable expressions. It was an age rich in every variety of thought, in every style of conduct. Mental life was in flux, thought was a seething cauldron that was continually throwing up some new manifestation of what lay beneath. Other ages have produced a uniform type of man expressive of that age. The Renaissance in its infinite variety seems to have produced some individual to typify each of its currents of thought and learning, however various. We can put our finger on this man and that, and say exactly for what peculiar aspect of his time he stands as the complete representative. Thus, we have for the consummate artist and man of character, Michael Angelo. For the consummate artist on a smaller scale, and man of no character, nay, even most complete rascal, have we not Benvenuto Cellini? For poet of the dawn, before the noonday of the Renaissance had begun to burn with fever-heat, we have the gracious Petrarch. For the poet of the full flowering age, when Romanticism had all but driven the calm classical ideal from the field, we have Ariosto. For the prince of consummate worldly wisdom, of ruthless cruelty and of abominable luxury, we have Alexander VI. For the last word in classical scholarship, blended with the gifts of the original poet, we have the

[1] Symonds' *Renaissance*, vol. ii.

elegant Politian. For the clever scurril knave of learning we have Sanazzaro. And for the visionary and philosophic ideal, the man of accomplishment and refinement, grasping at a phantom, there is Pico della Mirandola.

The Academy of Florence, founded, as we have said, upon Platonism, drew its inspiration from the interpretation supplied by Ficino. From his eighteenth year onwards till the close of his life, he never ceased producing works bearing upon the Platonic writings. At the age of forty-four he had completed the translation of all Plato's Dialogues into Latin. He followed it by a life of the philosopher, and a *Discourse upon the Platonic Doctrine of Immortality*. He translated also Plotinus, upon whose works he wrote a commentary, and his last important undertaking was his translation of *Dionysius the Areopagite*. With all this laborious study of the text of Plato, there was yet something missing. Ficino did not really understand Plato. The emancipation from the Middle Ages was not yet complete, and the minds of even the most enlightened students still confused mysticism with philosophy, and were pleased to read into the text of Plato arguments that had no existence there. Alexandrian mysticism obscured the view, and the Platonic Academicians of Florence, being as yet unfurnished with a proper critical apparatus, read their Plato in the light of Plotinus and of the vague though fascinating instructions of Gemistos Pletho. Still under the dominion of the Church, the Florentine Platonists were blown about by every wind of imagined doctrine which they fancied to be possible of reconcilement with theology. They were not given to subtle reasoning like the Middle Ages, but rather to misty speculation, an error that was the natural outgrowth of the vivid imagination of their time. For the Renaissance was par excellence an age of imagination rather than of exact thinking.

Around Lorenzo as patron, and Ficino as high-priest, were grouped the ablest men of the time—Politian, Landino, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Leo Battista Alberti, Michael Angelo, and Pulci. Their worship of Plato they exalted into a romance; they revived the celebration of the philosopher's birthday, which they honoured in picturesque ceremonial now restored after twelve hundred years. Ficino has left an account of one of these celebrations. The proceedings began with a banquet, after which the disciples entered

upon a discussion of the Symposium. The dialogue was rehearsed in its entirety, each member of the circle assuming the character of one or other of the disputants. We know who sustained some of the parts. Cavalcanti took Phædrus and Pausanias; Landino, Aristophanes; Marsuppini, Agathon; Benci explained the esoteric meaning of Diotima. 'Was there any one,' asks Symonds, 'to act Alcibiades, or did Lorenzo, perhaps, sit drinking till day flooded the meadows of Val d'Arno, passing round a two-handled goblet, and raising subtle questions about comedy and tragedy?' The doyen of the club was Christofero Landino, a Florentine who had been tutor to Lorenzo. He had held the chair of Rhetoric and Poetry, and later that of Latin Literature, in the University of Florence. He was the representative of pure scholarship, a laborious annotator of Horace and Virgil, a translator of Pliny. He is also remembered as a commentator on Dante, and as a lecturer on Petrarch. He is important to the present discussion on account of another work—the *Camaldolese Disputations*, in which he has left to us yet another picture of the intimate life of that fiercely intellectual, yet strangely mystical circle. The book is modelled upon the Tusculan Disputations of Cicero, and describes a meeting of the philosophers at the Convent of S. Remualdo, among the Tuscan hills. Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici are represented surrounded by a band of noble Florentine youths. They had gone for their villeggiatura to the cool hill country, there to forget for a time the fevered life of the city. To them enter Alberti and Ficino, and very soon they begin to hold what one may perhaps, without offence, describe as an intellectual picnic, for it is not always possible to divest those gatherings, serious as they were to those who held them, from some suspicion of elegant trifling. They were perfectly conscious, those old Florentines, that they were doing a beautiful thing in a beautiful way. They are never quite free from a suspicion of pose, but it was an admirable pose, and with all its defects it was furthering a great work. 'I give my sympathy,' says Meredith, 'to the blundering instrument of a possible progression.' It is in such a light that one must view the Florentine Academy. Our elegant disputants, as they reclined beside the fountain, began the ancient discussion upon the relative merits of the contemplative and the practical life. Alberti opened it in favour of contemplation. Lorenzo replied in

favour of practice. And so, through many fine arguments they at length arrived at the conclusion that the perfect man must know both. Symonds has most admirably summed up their conclusions in two lines of Goethe:

> 'Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,
> Sich ein Charakter in dem Strom der Welt.'

The discussion lasted for three days more, during which Virgil's poetry was considered. It is significant of the Academy that in its deliberations on Virgil the mediæval conception remained paramount. It was Virgil the allegorical poet, Virgil the mystical philosopher, that was present to their minds. Thence it was but a step to attempt to connect his poetry with the philosophy of Plato.

The other leader of the discussion, Alberti, was the friend of Leonardo, whose more commanding genius has obscured the fame of the other. Alberti had much in common with Leonardo, the same eagerness in the pursuit of science, the same inventive genius. He studied divination, and had the reputation of a wizard. He was in spirit, if not in act, a poet. The sight of the fields in autumn used to move him to tears, and this emotion of his may possibly have inspired the well-known lines of Tennyson. Artists and craftsmen had his especial favour. His conversation was brilliant and memorable. Alberti is numbered among the first writers of a pure Italian prose style. He painted and composed music; he was, in a word, a paragon of all the Arts. But at the best he was only a very perfect dilettante; his fame remains in the second rank.

But a still finer flower of learning was to blossom upon the Tuscan soil. Under the ægis of the Medici, and in close contact with the Academy, a boy was trained who was to make an imperishable name as Politian. His real name was Angelo Ambrogini; the name by which he is better known was given him from his birthplace, Montepulciano. Angelo was an infant prodigy; he was more, he was an infant prodigy that maintained and justified its early promise. At ten he entered the University of Florence, where he came under the best teaching of the day whether in Latin or Greek literature. His masters were Landino, Ficino, Argyropoulos, and Andronicos Callistos. From his earliest boyhood his poems and epigrams were celebrated. Before he was twenty he had produced

an edition of Catullus. He began to translate Homer into Latin verse, and was thence called *Homericus juvenis*. It was this work that first brought him into notice. Lorenzo took him up, and conferred on him continual favours which the scholar gratefully acknowledges in one of his letters. Before he was thirty he held the chair of Greek and Latin in Florence, and was appointed tutor to the young Medici. But he was no mere pedant. If ever man had the true fire of poetry in him, that man was Politian. Allowing for some imperfections, due to the still incomplete appreciation of the niceties of Greek and Latin prosody, the verse of Politian is worthy to be set beside the finest later poems of the *Anthology*. His verses were no mere school exercise, they glowed with real poetic fervour. Nor was his Greek and Latin prose a whit behind. It may perhaps have lacked eclecticism. To Politian, Latin was still a living language, and he wrote it as such. For him the whole of Latin literature was equally worthy of imitation. He drew no fine distinctions between a golden or a silver age, but the vitality of his style, its perfection and its polish, made the Latin of Politian the most memorable triumph of Renaissance scholarship. He gathered up and transmuted all that had been done by the students of the previous hundred years. 'Through him,' says Symonds, 'as through a lens, the rays of previous culture were transmitted in a column of pure light.'

The influence of Politian as a teacher was electrical, the more so that his appearance was not prepossessing. He had none of the Olympic majesty of face and bearing that made Gemistos Pletho so attractive and compelling a master. Politian, for all his gifts of mind, was ugly, insignificant, and squint-eyed, but the gods had given him a beautiful voice and divine eloquence. No sooner had he begun to lecture than a thrill ran through his audience, who sat spell-bound at the brilliancy, the wit, and the wealth of apposite illustrations with which he enlivened his theme. But he was no mere firework. He placed exact scholarship on a surer basis than it had hitherto found, and it was he who first began to introduce system into the floating mass of contradictory readings that obstructed the path of the student. It was under Politian that the collation of manuscripts was seriously undertaken, and that definite results were obtained in critical scholarship. His influence extended

THE DUKE OF URBINO AT A LECTURE

Attributed to MELOZZO DA FORLI

Royal Collection at Windsor

far beyond the lecture-room, and he became, through one of the by-products of his tremendous industry, what would to-day be termed a popular writer. When he issued his *Miscellanies* in 1489, the book created a furore. A contemporary letter, written by a secretary to the Duke of Milan, gives a most interesting account of what Politian's popularity amounted to. 'Going lately,' he says, 'into one of the public offices, I found a number of the young clerks neglecting their prince's business, and lost in the study of a book which had been distributed in sheets among them. When I asked what new book had appeared, they answered "Politian's *Miscellanies*." I mounted their desk, sat down among them, and began to read with equal eagerness, but as I could not spend much time there, I sent at once to the bookseller's stall for a copy of the work.'

Like so many men of his time in the same walk of life, Politian sullied his great qualities by a fawning flattery of his patrons, and by a laxity of life which led ultimately to his being withdrawn from intimate association with the sons of Lorenzo. He died dishonoured and suspected, and on his tomb was placed the burlesque epitaph: 'In this grave lies Politian, the angel who had one head, and what is new, three tongues.'

In imitation of the Florentine Academy, another of somewhat less distinction grew up in Rome, under Junius Pomponius Laetus, who belonged to the house of the Sanseverini, although not of the legitimate line. He was a pupil of Lorenzo Valla, and so ardent a Latinist that he refused to learn Greek. He was a serious student, who tried to revive in his own life the fine simplicity of the Roman Republic. He lived like a simple farmer of the Campagna in the days of Cato. Luxury he despised; he took his recreation in field-sports, went fishing and fowling, and loved to enjoy his frugal meal beneath an oak-tree. In a modest house on the Esquiline he received his scholars. His lecture-room was open before dawn. We have an account of him that shines weirdly across the centuries, and throws his figure into high relief as he passes with his lantern through the streets of sleeping Rome to meet his disciples. No matter how early the hour he appointed, he was sure to find a crowded assembly. It is by the academy, however, rather than by his formal teaching that Pomponius is remembered. According to the genial affectation of the time, the members of the club assumed classic names under

which they carried on their discussion. Like the Florentines they revived ancient festivals, and, as was appropriate to a Roman academy, they celebrated the birthday feast of Rome. The drama also claimed them; they acted the comedies of Plautus, and made some attempt to revive the old Atellan Farces.

The distinctive work of the Roman academy was the examination and the interpretation of the antiquities of Rome itself. Platina, in his *Lives of the Popes*, says of the academicians: 'The discourse we had was only concerning the ancient and modern learning, the way of fighting and famous men, and such-like things that are common subjects of talk.' This answer was made by Platina to Pope Paul II. when he was under examination during the persecution of the Roman academy. The bigoted and ignorant Paul II., having taken a sudden spite at the academicians, was pleased to rank them as heretics and to treat them accordingly. He went about the examination of Platina in particular in a very leisurely manner. After dinner, he used to have the academician in, and either put him on the rack or hung him up by his wrists, the better to promote polite conversation. Platina in his *Life of Paul II.*, that piece of cunningly veiled satire, describes these interviews with delightful nonchalance. Paul, like most heresy hunters, scented scandal even in the most innocent details. He inquired why his prisoner had changed, that is Latinised or Grecised, according to custom, the names of his learned correspondents. He answered boldly, as his humour was, that 'it did not concern either his judgment or the Pope under what name he pleased to go, for that he had no naughty end in it, for that out of respect to antiquity, he was wont to make use of many ancient names, as spurs to edge on the modern youth to a virtuous emulation.' Paul, he adds, was an enemy and a great despiser of Humane learning.

Contemporary with the Roman academy was that of Naples, which grew up under Jovianus Pontanus. It originated in the patronage of letters of Alfonso the Magnanimous, and more immediately in the social gatherings held by Beccadelli. After the death of Alfonso, Pontanus seems to have organised these desultory meetings into a regular club. He was a native of Certo, and owed to Beccadelli his introduction to the house of Aragon. He was secretary, tutor, and ambassador under Ferdinand I., Alfonso II.,

and Ferdinand II., and he accompanied his masters on their military expeditions. An excellent Latinist, he wrote verse in the true classic manner, and love elegiacs that rival those of Ovid in their warmth of colouring. He was looked upon as a model of style, and was imitated very frequently by his successors. His glowing descriptions of southern Italian landscape left a permanent impress upon the genius of Neapolitan poets. As a prose writer he was distinguished chiefly by his moral treatises, and he appeared as an uncompromising scourge of his age. It is as a moralist that he has been excused for the time-serving eulogy with which he greeted the coming of Charles VIII. to Naples. In thus welcoming the conqueror, he seems disloyal to his former patron and friends, but it has been urged in his favour that he had a sincere desire to see vice in high places suppressed, and that he may have sincerely hoped that Charles would prove the guarantee of better times.

The other great name of the Neapolitan academy is that of Sanazzaro, a poet even more glowing than Pontanus. He was a perfect example of neo-paganism. Amid the voluptuous literature of that age—and there is a sufficiency of it—nothing can be found to equal the writings of Sanazzaro. His *Arcadia* is a glorification of physical beauty, conceived in a spirit of entire freedom from the restraints of church or morality. This was, however, only a by-work. Such were the strange paradoxes of the age that Sanazzaro, who exalted physical beauty and luxury to the pitch of licence, found his most serious task in an epic on the birth of Christ. This work occupied him for twenty years, and it was regarded as a model of correct and polished writing. Sanazzaro's contemporaries, who were well fitted to judge in these matters, gave it an enthusiastic welcome. It is significant, however, of the limitations of criticism that this grotesque travesty of the true epic manner, however admirable the mere Latinity may have been, should have escaped ridicule. It is to the credit of the best critics of the time that they have some glimmering of the inappropriateness of Sanazzaro's epic machinery. Pagan mythology and sacred history are mingled in the most incongruous manner. Over all one can trace the lingering influence of that mediæval temper which read into Virgil's fourth eclogue a prophecy of the birth of Christ. The Muses of Helicon in Sanazzaro's poem foretell the same event, and Proteus prophesies the Messiah's

advent to the river god Jordan. At the moment when the Angel of the Annunciation finds Mary, the Virgin is represented as reading the Sibyls, and the possibility of such an incongruity leads us at one step to the inclusion of the Sibyls among the prophets on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Examples might be multiplied infinitely, but these are sufficient to illustrate the lengths to which the classical affectation had carried the poets of the day.

Sanazzaro enjoyed equal fame as an epigrammatist, and his gibes, levelled chiefly at the Borgias, won immense popularity. When he accompanied Alfonso of Aragon upon a campaign, he used to throw off his stinging trifles during the march, and at evening, round the camp fire, they were read with delight by Alfonso's officers. It has been suggested, not without reason, that to Sanazzaro's mordant wit we may trace a great part of the legend of Lucrezia Borgia. Sanazzaro, it must be confessed, had a scandalous tongue, and an invention so ready that facts became to him of minor importance. The Borgias afforded a tempting target, and although modern criticism has declared Lucrezia far too colourless a person to have been the vicious monster of popular imagination, she certainly gave some occasion for scandal, if it were only by countenancing with her presence the orgies of her father, Alexander VI. Hireling epigrammatists like Sanazzaro are not overmuch given to chivalry, and hence it may very well be that the poet flung a great deal of the mud that ultimately stuck to Lucrezia. In this respect Sanazzaro is unquotable, but no one can deny his wit.

After the expulsion of the Medici, the Florentine Academy languished, although it was revived some thirty years later in the time of Duke Lorenzo, under the auspices of the Ruccellai family. It had passed away, however, from its earlier classical enthusiasms, and was now entirely devoted to the study of vernacular poetry. Something of the same kind happened with the Neapolitan and Roman academies after the deaths of Laetus and Pontanus, but the ancient spirit had fled. They became for the most part associations of precious persons more or less ridiculous, who grouped themselves together under fantastic titles. Their studies became trifling, and at last they are found engaged upon such exercises as a dissertation upon the nose of the president. At Venice the academy took another form, under Aldus Manutius, whose work has been more important

to the human race at large than the mystical philosophies of Florence, or the voluptuous poetry of Naples, for the work of Aldus was that of the printer. Around him he gathered the most accomplished Grecians and Latinists of the time, who helped him in his extraordinary and epoch-making project, which was to produce one edition a month of some ancient classical author. It was a scheme as magnificent as it was audacious, and one which calls for treatment in a separate chapter.

CHAPTER XIII

PRINTING AND THE RENAISSANCE

THE romance of the written and printed word, and their effect on the lives of men, will never fail to be of supreme interest. But it is difficult, in turning to consider how printing, coming to the aid of the Renaissance spirit, spread the message of Humanism and the war-cries of the Reformation throughout the known world, to avoid a preliminary discussion of the earlier days, following the fifth century Sack of Rome. But the limits of a single volume that seeks to say something about every aspect of the Renaissance, forbid discursiveness. It must suffice to say that after Alaric the Visigoth's Sack of Rome in 410 the classics were preserved by the monasteries, the houses of the Benedictines being honourably to the fore in this connection. One may not dwell here upon the fascinating story of the scriptorium, one may not tell of the literary monks, the monastery schools or the elaborate and well-considered system under which manuscripts were lent by one religious house to another. But all these subjects will repay those who care to study the early history of learning in this country; they breathe the atmosphere of studious repose, they tell the story of full and happy lives. While England's share in the accumulation and distribution of knowledge was comparatively small, three events of the fourteenth century were making for a rapid development. Rag paper was manufactured for the first time shortly after the year 1300, and became so important that before the century was over Venice had forbidden the exportation of rags, and about the time that rag paper was made, Dante's *Divine Comedy* was first given to the world. Half a century later the *Decameron* was published. It is well to remember that these three significant incidents in the life of the times all preceded the discovery of the use of movable metal type, and that printing did not reach Italy until 1464.

It may be doubted whether any great advantage would have

been derived from an earlier discovery: there was so little to print that would have been understood. Before Dante, the full possibilities of language were hardly dreamt of. It did but exist to express certain needs and emotions; there was little that was subtle in the European use of words. Dante created a fresh use for them, and it was left to Petrarch and Boccaccio in turn to polish the weapon Dante had forged. Boccaccio was, of course, Petrarch's pupil, and he was the master who strove by all the means at his command to develop the establishment of manuscript libraries and to extend the range of the written word. In the fourteenth century xylography, as practised for centuries in China, came into use in Europe. It would appear to have started in the Netherlands, and to have made some progress, but this printing from blocks was, of course, merely decorative, and was designed to give an added charm to the manuscripts upon which thousands of skilled copyists throughout Europe were lavishing all their time and care. Printing from movable type came so slowly that for many years there was some doubt about the question of the actual discovery. Lawrence Koster (1370-1440) was supposed by some to have been the real father of printing, but the claims of Gutenberg are now admitted, and Koster must take second place, although he was born nearly thirty years before Gutenberg; and while his metal type is said to date from 1346, the type he carved out of beech-bark preceded it by several years. Gutenberg, generally recognised as the Father of Printing,[1] was born in Mayence in the last years of the fourteenth century, and was at first a manufacturer of looking-glasses. After some residence in Strasburg, he returned to Mayence in 1448, with his invention of movable metal type complete, and with plans for the considerable development of the mechanism of the hand-press. Lacking the necessary capital to give his invention a proper trial, he borrowed from Johann Fust, the leading goldsmith of Mayence, eight hundred gulden, and in later years he borrowed some more from the same man, who brought an action against him to recover it. The printing experiments were quite successful, and Gutenberg's patron, Fust, was so interested in the work that he married his daughter to one Schöffer, who had been for some time in Gutenberg's employ.

[1] For the latest statement of the case against Gutenberg, see J. H. Hessels, *The Gutenberg Fiction* (Moring).

Now we see printing firmly established on German soil, and in the ordinary course of events the industry might have enjoyed a long and profitable career and conferred upon its German practitioners something in the nature of a monopoly. Mayence might have become as closely associated with printing as Florence is associated with the painting of the Tuscan school and the work of men whose genius could not be satisfied by conquest in one field. But the fifteenth century was a troubled one, and at the moment when Fust had travelled as far as Paris with the great Latin Bible that was the first achievement of the house of Fust & Schöffer, the Archbishop Adolf of Nassau arrayed his army against Mayence, captured the town, and authorised his soldiers to sack it. Just as an autumn storm scatters seed far and wide and helps to carry the fruits of one district to a far distant soil, so the sack of Mayence, for all the suffering it inflicted upon the city and the citizens, availed to spread the art of printing. Those who had worked for Gutenberg and perhaps for other printers, fled in all directions, carrying their knowledge with them, and in two years we find a printing press on Italian soil at Subiaco, sixty miles from Rome, where Cardinal Juan Torquemada, not to be confounded with the Inquisitor-General, who was a much younger man of the same name and family, gave every assistance to the new venture. This was in 1464; in 1467 two Germans (Schweinheim and Pannartz) were installed in the Massimi Palace in Rome, where they laboured for five years, issued thirty-six volumes, and then gave up their work for lack of funds.

Before mentioning any more of the men who made printing famous in early days, it is well to explain why the two German printers in Rome, together with many other printers elsewhere, proved unable to work at a profit. The truth is that they were interfering with a flourishing industry, they were ruining the copyists, they were breaking down a monopoly. The scriptoria of the monasteries, numerous and well-appointed though they were, were far from exhausting the services of the copyists. Great libraries would employ a large staff of these men, and would engage for their assistance scholars competent to settle vexed points and inaccuracies in texts. Princes and nobles who were interested in matters of culture would have their own staffs of scholars and scribes. The introduction of printing threatened all these men, for the copyists

would hardly be wanted any longer, and one scholar could do a great deal of editing for the press. Printers found it necessary to produce their books at very low prices, something less than a quarter of the price of a manuscript copy of the same work, and even then there was a great prejudice against them. Not only manuscript makers but manuscript collectors looked askance at developments which threatened, or so they thought, seriously to reduce the value of libraries, and it is needless perhaps to add that such social influence as existed in those times was directed against the printed book. As late as 1482 we find Vespasiano da Bisticci, collector and librarian to Frederick of Urbino, declaring that his master would be ashamed to have a printed book in his library.

It is perhaps well for printing that it received in its early years the support of the Church. Just as churchmen overlooked the possibility that art might turn from grace and become secular, so they ignored the danger, really a far more considerable one, that printing might come to serve men on lines that the Church would not rule. Some of the Renaissance Popes, notably Nicholas v., Julius II., and the last of them all, Leo x., were book lovers, and so long as wisdom was collected, the first two had scant regard for the form in which it appeared. The struggle between the Church and the Press began in the time of Leo x., and is waged to this day. One of the earliest examples of Papal protest occurred when Alfonso of Aragon, who did so much to encourage learning in Naples, was patron of Beccadelli, whose *Hermaphroditus* was placed by Pope Eugenius IV. upon the Index.

It should be remembered that there have been many Indexes. Strictly speaking, none existed in the time of Pope Eugenius IV., but the Pope was none the less at liberty to condemn a book that was held to be subversive of the public morals. Censorship was at first largely a matter with which a government was concerned ; in Venice it was referred to the Council of Ten. The first claim of the Holy See to grant monopolies and to make threats of excommunication would seem to date from 1515, though the Inquisition challenged an earlier discretion. This led to an order by the Council of Ten establishing a general censorship, and some dozen years later the council was forced to intervene again in order to check the multiplication of obscene books. In 1487 Pope Innocent VIII. addressed the

first Papal Bull relating to printed books, to Italy, Germany, France, Spain, England, and Scotland. Whatever effect the document may have had elsewhere, it failed altogether to trouble the Venetians, and in 1548, a year after the Inquisition had instituted in Venice trials for offences committed through the medium of printed matter, the guild of printers and booksellers came into being, the decree of the Council of Ten being dated 18th January 1549.

In 1562 the Council of Trent appointed a committee of eighteen men to make inquiry into the conditions under which printing was carried on, and they issued the famous Tridentine Index with its ten rules. This Index is concerned chiefly with matters of heresy, but the Venetian Government accepted it, and five years later published regulations to the book trade, following the lines laid down by the eighteen investigators. It is well to remember that before the sixteenth century closed Venice had a larger trade in books than any other city in the world, and the control that the Church sought to enforce was extremely harassing to printers and publishers alike. In Germany and England the Papal Writ did not run to the publisher's office; but in parts of Italy, in Spain, and in France the Church was making no inconsiderable effort to stifle the force that she herself had helped so considerably to develop. Matters of doctrine were of more importance than any others, and the publisher of the book that was pornographic had less to fear than he who issued a work that was alleged to be tainted with heresy. The history of the Inquisition will supply full details to those who seek to inquire more closely into this side of the progress of the printed book; but in fairness to the Church, we must remember that it did not stand then upon such strong foundations as might enable its directors to turn a deaf ear or a blind eye to the spoken or written utterances of its many enemies. As a force in the development of the Renaissance, the value of printing cannot be overrated, but it is so evident as to need no insistence. We have but to remember that while manuscripts were the prizes of the rich, books could be acquired by the people, the rank and file, whose imagination had hardly been less stirred than that of the upper classes by the revelation of the times. They could see and admire the marvels of architecture, sculpture, and painting, they might even have a restricted access to a few manuscripts, but printing made them the possessors

of books, and enabled them to feel for the first time that they too had some direct association with the new culture, some share in its treasure and its secrets.

Had the Church succeeded in carrying out the work of suppression, the freedom of the press must have been delayed for centuries, but her attempts to coerce what she had previously encouraged were only partially successful. Spain, then as now, lay prone under the yoke. In France, after a century of eventful striving, the Crown took over the censorship. In southern Germany and Austria, Church and State entered into an unholy alliance for the suppression of literature, but north Germany made a good fight, and when in France the University of Paris became Catholic, scholarship travelled into Holland, where tyranny met its master. Throughout Europe the fight that the Church was waging with freedom of thought was always conditioned by a certain necessary regard for the uses of printing. It was impossible for the Church to ignore or even to refrain from using the printing press; nor could her officers contrive, even in the countries subjugated to the Church's will, so to watch every press that nothing opposed to accepted dogma should see the light. There is ample reason to believe that many a printing press gave official currency to orthodox views and an effective private circulation to others.

On a previous page, before the great question of censorship was raised, it was remarked that, just before the Sack of Mayence, Fust had travelled as far as Paris with his great folio Bible, and it is worthy of notice that his firm ultimately set up branches in Paris and Angers, and was involved in suits relating to matters of copyright. Piracy was very profitable in those days, because the man with a printing press and some type could issue his pirated editions with all the corrections that had cost the original printer the price of an experienced editor's services. The great centre of piracy in Renaissance time was Cologne, where our own William Caxton is believed to have studied printing work between the years 1471 and 1474. Then the greatest printing house was that of Aldus in Venice. Plantin of Antwerp came long after, and the Elzevirs of Leyden followed Plantin.

After Venice, Basle stands out as a very important centre of Renaissance culture. Printing had been introduced to the city

about the year 1455 by a pupil of Gutenberg or Fust, and interest in learning, and consequently in books, received considerable stimulus five years later, when Basle's university was established. Amerbach speedily became the city's leading publisher, and after him one followed who had been a member of his house, Froben, who employed as editor that great scholar and Humanist, Erasmus. Under the influence of Erasmus, the city of Basle showed one of the brightest points of light that illumined European darkness. In these days of labour unrest it is interesting to recall, in passing, a strike of compositors which took place in Basle in 1471.

Another firm that was achieving distinction in the times of Amerbach and Froben is that of Koberger of Nuremberg, but it was, of course, in Venice rather than in Switzerland or Germany that printing was being carried on under the happiest auspices. In 1469 John of Speyer had issued his *Epistolæ Familiares*. Two years later Jenson, the Frenchman, published from the same city his *Decor Puellarum*. John of Speyer had received a five year monopoly from the Doge, but did not live to enjoy more than one year of it. Jenson was made a noble by Pope Sixtus IV., and a year before his death in 1480 he sold matrices to Andrea Torrescendo of Asola, who was father-in-law of Aldus Manutius, the greatest of all Venetian printers.

The output of Venice in the beginnings of the sixteenth century included Breviaries, Bibles, Classics, Law Books, Poetry, Romances, and School-books, and so eager was the general public, in Venice at least, to respond to the printers' efforts that we read of books being exchanged for goods by people who had no money with which to purchase them. These dealings in kind instead of in cash are not uncommon in remote parts of Europe to-day, and extend to books, though of course the demand for such things among illiterate people is very trifling.

Among the associations that did much to spread the light of learning, mention must be made of the Brothers of Common Life (Clerici de Vita Communi); sometimes they were called Brothers of the Pen. This was a Dutch foundation, established in Deventer in the year 1383, when Lawrence Koster was thirteen years old and Gutenberg was unborn. It existed primarily for the distribution of manuscript written in the language of the country of circulation,

and for some years the Church looked askance upon its programme. But gradually the sincerity of purpose of the brethren gained due recognition, and the public value of their efforts is shown by the support that enabled them, out of the proceeds of the sale of manuscript, to maintain branches in different countries. That they moved quickly is shown by the establishment of their own printing presses as early as 1468. These presses produced books of devotion and works of general instruction, and by the year 1490 more than fifty printing establishments were working under the direction of the brotherhood.

Although England did not come under the influence of the Renaissance as readily as middle and western Europe, and although her direct contribution to it is almost insignificant, the history of printing cannot be considered without reference to William Caxton. His work is of course largely derivative, but it is of supreme importance to this country, and the seventy years of a life that opened in 1422 carry him through the times when printing was establishing itself in Europe. Caxton was for many years a wool merchant. It was in the court of the Duke of Burgundy that he met Colard Mansion, the first printer to set up in Bruges, where Caxton was the acknowledged head of the English community, and where he passed into the service of the Duchess of Burgundy, who was a sister of King Edward IV. of England. He seems to have had a taste for literature, which the service of the Duchess enabled him to develop, and the success of his first work, a translation of the *History of Troy*, was so great that it was impossible to get manuscript copies fast enough. The Duke of Burgundy was a great patron of letters and master of a magnificent manuscript library. He had encouraged Colard Mansion to set up his printing establishment, and it was here, and perhaps in Cologne as well in the printing works of Ulrich Zell, that Caxton first studied printing. Both Cologne and Bruges are keen to claim the credit of having made Caxton what he was, but history seems inclined to favour the claim of the latter town. In 1476 Caxton left Bruges, and with type and presses that had belonged originally to Mansion he set up in Westminster as a printer and publisher, and laboured for the fifteen years that remained to him. *The Dictes or Sayengis of the Philosophres*, translated by Earl Rivers, and issued by Caxton in 1477, is regarded as the first

book printed and published in England, and the following year witnessed the publication of the first edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. A second edition, with many corrections taken from a manuscript that Chaucer himself had revised, was published by Caxton in 1484, the year in which the *Golden Legend* was issued at the instance of the Earl of Arundel, who agreed to take 'a reasonable number of copies, and to give the publisher annually a buck in the summer and a doe in the winter.' In 1485 comes Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*; in 1489 the Statutes of Henry VII., a folio printed in English; in 1491 *The Arte and Craft to Know Well to Die*, translated by Caxton himself from the French version of the Latin original. This was a timely volume, for Caxton died in the year of its production. It must be remembered that the father of English printing laboured in very strenuous times, and that when he set up his business in England the Wars of the Roses were not yet at an end.

While London can claim the honour of having housed the first English printing office, Oxford may claim the second; indeed, with the pardonable pride and anxiety that overtakes even scholars at times, an attempt was made by some early Oxford historians to claim pride of place for Oxford, on the ground that a treatise on the Apostles' Creed, issued from that city, is dated 1468, while the first known Caxton publication belongs to 1477. It is generally accepted now that the earlier date is a misprint; one of the leading authorities on the subject, Mr. Madar, in a book called *The Early Oxford Press*, takes this view. Oxford seems to have derived both material and knowledge not from London but from Cologne. The printing press was short-lived; granting that the first volume was issued not in 1468 but in 1478, it was in existence for about ten years. Between 1487 and 1557 Oxford seems to have done little or nothing in the way of printing, though from time to time a foreign printer came to bring some brief assistance to scholarship.

Very shortly after Oxford, the Abbey of St. Albans, whose connection with literature had been long and honourable, established a press from which issued the famous treatises on hawking and hunting that are known as the *Book of St. Albans*. Cambridge University took up printing about the year 1520.

It is supremely fortunate for this country that printing was established before the arrival of the Elizabethan dramatists and

poets, for it is clear that the loss to succeeding generations would have been very serious had the work, so treasured to-day, been entrusted to the manuscript and the copyist. Although the Renaissance was dying long before 1593, when *Venus and Adonis*, the first work of Shakespeare that appeared in printed form, was published, the Elizabethans are so far the product of the Renaissance, and so largely the English contribution thereto, that it is permissible to refer to Shakespeare at least in this place. We find that printing had so far developed in his time that more than seventy of his works, plays, or poems were issued in a space of twenty-three years, though literary property may still be regarded as non-existent.

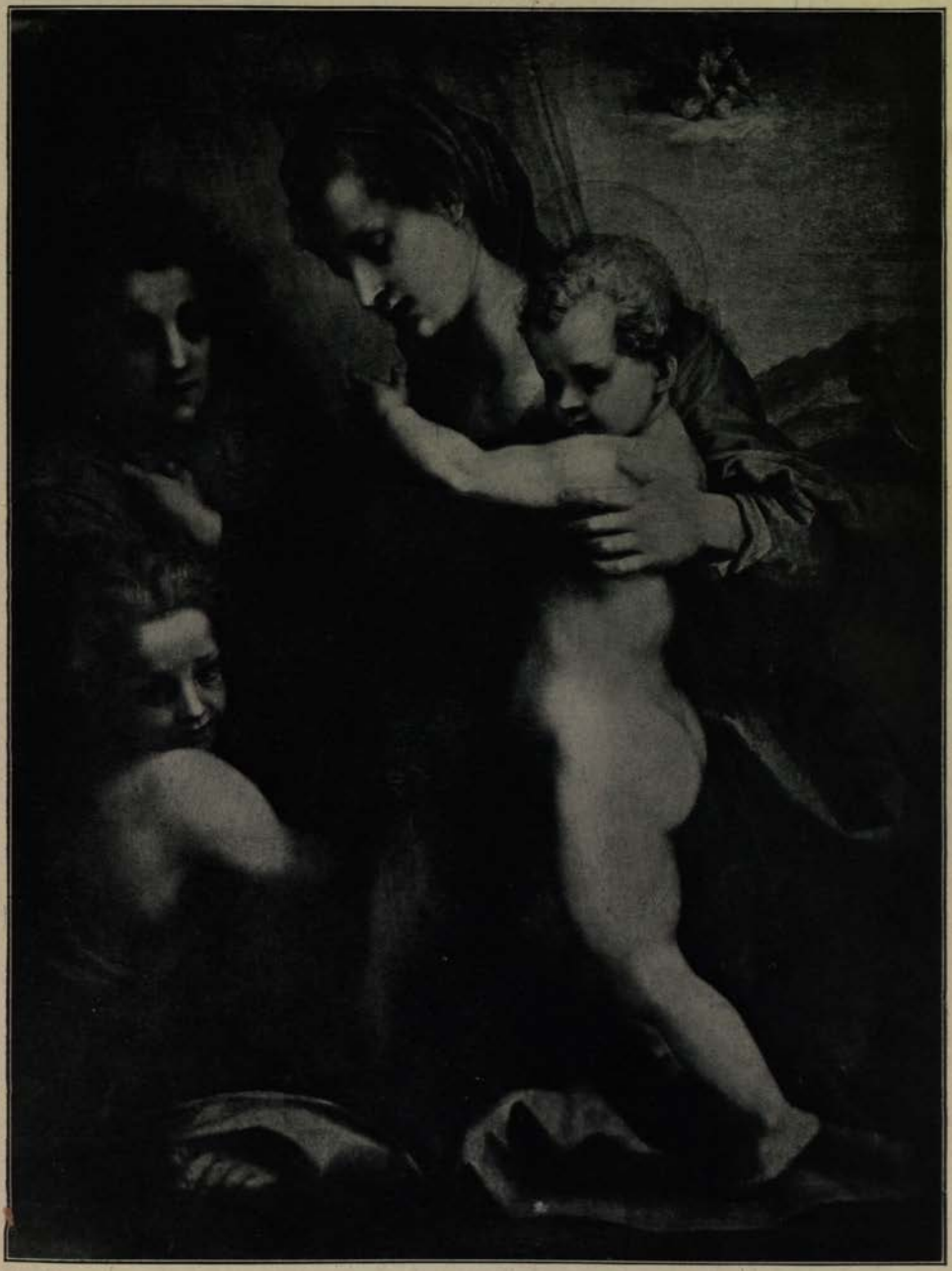
We have not, however, to think of printing in any of its more restricted aspects, but rather to look at the labour it accomplished in spreading every kind of knowledge. The extraordinary life-work of Martin Luther, who provided Europe with the first act of a world drama on which the curtain has not yet fallen, depended for no small part of its effect upon the printing press. Luther issued his challenge to the Church, which had accepted printing without the least fear or foreknowledge of what was to come, and the presses of Wittenberg circulated the challenge, of which the effect was very considerably magnified by futile attempts at suppression on the part of the authorities. In the end authority was compelled to turn certain of its defenders into printers, and to reply on something that looked like even terms, though of course the connivance of priest-ridden kings, the forces of superstition, the Index and the Ban all helped to load the dice of Mother Church.

Luther's utterances were of enormous importance in bringing about the Reformation, which is so closely and intimately associated with the Renaissance. It is unnecessary to give here any detailed list of Luther's publications, but just a few may be mentioned together with their dates, for they will help to show the enormous value of printing, in those early days, to a world that had newly learned to think for itself, and had yet to be convinced that the free use of the human mind was not a form of heresy.

When Tetzel's open sale of Indulgences moved Luther to active revolt, he printed his famous sermon on *Indulgences and Grace*. Three years later, in 1520, came the address to the Christian nobility of Germany, a pamphlet of which five thousand copies were sold in

five days. Then in a brief space appeared the treatise, 'Why the Books of the Pope and His Disciples were Burnt by Doctor Martin Luther.' One year later came short papers entitled the *Abuse of Masses* and *On Monastic Vows*, and in September of the following year the complete German version of the New Testament, of which the first edition of five thousand copies was exhausted in less than three months. Luther continued to publish until 1545, but the works just referred to come within the true Renaissance period and fall properly within the scope of these pages. The famous Ninety-Five Theses, known best by the name of *Solutions*, were printed in Wittenberg in 1517; and it is interesting to note that, while the great Reformer found printers in many towns beyond Wittenberg, and published no small part of his output in Latin as well as German, there were orthodox printers who would not for their soul's sake have anything to do with him, though the demand for his work was very great and authors' fees were a thing unknown. Many of the pamphlets ran into a large number of authorised or unauthorised editions, and this demand was enormously stimulated by the Bull of the last Renaissance Pope, Leo X., who in 1520 excommunicated Martin Luther, condemned all his books and ordered them to be destroyed, while forbidding good Churchmen to take any part in the production of future works from the same pen. This may have been a hard task for the great Medicean Prince, who was a patron of letters. Yet in those days, that is to say in the years of Luther's life, more than a hundred thousand copies of his New Testament were printed in Wittenberg alone, and as the trade in pirated editions was so extremely profitable, we may feel sure that there was no lack of those.

It is not difficult to associate with the Renaissance this wide-spread interest in the printed word. The newly awakened spirit of man, striving to grasp something of the mystery and beauty of life, was too strong a force even for a Church that deemed herself all-powerful. While the printer helped to spread far and wide the influence of the time, the success of his multiform efforts was assured because the age itself was ripe for the reception of his message. So the two great forces played into each other's hand, supplying men with the ammunition that was to serve the Reformers at least in the long and bloody struggle that lay before them.



VIRGIN AND CHILD WITH ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST AND TWO ANGELS, BY ANDREA DEL SARTO

(*Wallace Collection*)

(The finest example of del Sarto's work in England)

But that the period lies a little beyond Renaissance times, it would be possible to associate the rise of the Inquisition with the discovery of printing, for we find in the second decade following the Sack of Rome that the Dominican Cardinal Caraffa advised Pope Paul III. to establish an Inquisition on account of the doubts rising in the popular mind in regard to certain points of Roman faith and ritual. The Cardinal of Burgos supported his brother Dominican in his plea for an Inquisition, and Caraffa is said to have declared that even as St. Peter subdued the first heresiarchs in no other place than Rome, so must the successors of Peter destroy all the heresies of the whole world in Rome. In support of this advice, which created the Inquisition and all its unspeakable horrors, Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Order of the Jesuits, sent in a special memorial, and the Bull of the 21st July 1542 appointing six cardinals as 'Commissioners of the Apostolic See and Inquisitors General and Universal in matters of Faith on both sides of the Alps' was issued while Martin Luther was still thundering at the walls of Rome, and Paul III. was in St. Peter's chair.

It is curious and instructive to note how Spain, having been the first to crush the new-born spirit of the Renaissance in her own country, was all-powerful to assist in the development of a campaign against new thought elsewhere; and although she did undoubtedly serve her ecclesiastical masters, it was at as big a price as any country may be called upon to pay, the loss of empire.

Had the Church succeeded through the medium of the Inquisition in carrying out its designs against the freedom of thought, it is possible that the whole period of re-birth, to which the fourteenth and fifteenth and a part of the sixteenth century bear witness, would have proved ineffective; even the memory of it would have been banned and barred as a forbidden thing. Surely among the claims that books make upon our affection, none is greater than that which is founded upon the knowledge of the desperate struggle that was necessary to preserve the gift of freedom of thought to the people.

CHAPTER XIV

EDUCATIONAL IDEALISTS IN THE RENAISSANCE

In the early days of the revival of learning, and somewhat before the full glory of Humanistic study had dawned upon Italy, there arose a great pioneer who, while he left no literary remains, yet by his life and work exercised a most profound influence on European education. His work indeed is still alive, and although his name is seldom heard except amongst special students of the period, there is hardly a teacher of repute, even at the present day, who does not consciously or unconsciously follow the methods of Vittorino da Feltre. His real name was Vittorino Rambaldoni, but he took his better-known surname from his birthplace. He was born in 1378, and early showed an inclination towards learning. John of Ravenna was his master in Latin; Gasparino Barzizza taught him Rhetoric. A typical poor scholar of his time, he had first to support himself by drudgery, and seeking to learn mathematics from Pelacani of Padua, he became that master's scullion. The master, however, neglected him, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that he contrived to learn the elements of geometry. In 1417 he went to Venice, where he made the acquaintance of Guarino, who taught him Greek. Thereafter he returned to Padua and opened a private school, devised on entirely democratic lines. His classes were open to rich and poor alike, and the only distinction was that the rich had to pay fees while the poor attended free. Without harshness, Vittorino was the first of the moral disciplinarians. He would keep no pupil who refused to work; he demanded a high standard of conduct from every one, and he inculcated doctrines of plain living and high thinking. It was never part of his ambition to shine as a great public lecturer and to draw huge audiences. In this he is in sharp contrast to the majority of the Humanists, who mingled a great deal of vainglory with solid accomplishments. He had the courage to defy the general dislike of the schoolmaster's

calling which George Meredith has described as 'that dis-esteemed profession.' So little was it liked in Vittorino's time, that when the great Professor Filelfo was urged to open an elementary school, he asked sarcastically if his friends considered him a licensed victualler. It was reserved for Vittorino to make schoolmastering not only respectable, but noble.

His opportunity came to him, as so many similar opportunities came in those days, through the direct patronage of a princely house. His first experiment in Padua had not been altogether a success. The public gymnasium there was ill-ordered, and Vittorino did not receive from the authorities the support he required in checking the licence of his pupils. He accordingly removed to Venice, where he extended his fame as a private teacher. Just at that time, as it happened, the Marquis Gian Francesco Gonzaga was in want of a tutor for his two sons, Ludovico and Carlo. The marquis was already touched with the prevailing interest in the things of the ancient world, and he had made himself a considerable scholar. For the sturdy virtues of the Roman republic he had the utmost reverence, and he was therefore ready, when he sought to engage Vittorino as his boys' tutor, to agree to the master's stipulation that he must have entire charge of his pupils, and that he must be allowed to remove them from all the conflicting influences of the Mantuan court.

It was no easy task Vittorino had undertaken, for the boys were already in great measure spoiled. They had never known any sort of discipline. Ludovico was lazy, gluttonous, and so terribly overgrown that his legs would hardly support him. Carlo, on the other hand, was a thin and rather miserable boy, who had outgrown his strength. The new tutor immediately set to work to devise a system to restore to the boys healthy minds and healthy bodies. The marquis assigned to Vittorino and his pupils a villa called Casa Zojoza, or the 'House of Joy,' which was far too luxurious for Vittorino's purpose. Gradually, however, he effected reform. He dismissed the perfumed lackeys, he banished the gold and silver plate from the table, he got rid of the wilder associates of his pupils and their more dissolute servants. He engaged a trusty porter to keep intruders at bay; he enforced plain clothes and simple living. At first the boys rebelled and complained to their father,

but the marquis was a man of sense and confirmed Vittorino in his rule. Gradually the beneficial effects of the system began to tell. It was not with the mind alone that Vittorino was concerned. In equal value he held the athletic sports of the Greeks, and he devised for his pupils a course of strenuous physical exercises. He set them to hunt and fish, to run and jump, to wrestle and fence; he taught them to walk gracefully—above all things to be temperate. Under this rational training, Ludovico shed his gross flesh, and Carlo, who on account of his constitutional weakness was carefully nourished and encouraged to eat, regained his proper habit of body.

But the young men were not trained alone. The fame of Vittorino's system had gone abroad, and noble families throughout the country sought admittance for their sons to the school of the young Gonzaga. Vittorino agreed, on the condition that he should make his own selections without respect to rank or wealth. With the morally deficient he would have nothing to do. At the same time he admitted on his own account, and supported by his own generosity, a number of poor students of suitable parentage. His school grew, and he had to engage a large staff of assistants—grammarians, logicians, mathematicians, drawing-masters, painters, riding-masters, teachers of singing, swimming, and fencing. The only branches of learning that were not taught were, curiously enough, Natural Philosophy and Civil and Canon Law. These, however, were more particularly the province of the universities, and Vittorino may have thought that they were very well left until a later period. In all these projects Vittorino enjoyed the unstinted sympathy of the Marquis Gian Francesco, who must also have helped him with his purse in the maintenance of his sixty poor scholars.

In Vittorino's teaching is very apparent one of the earliest and most vital features of the Renaissance, the return to the appreciation of style. He laid great stress upon the beauty of the authors read, and he taught his pupils to distinguish between the individual excellencies of Cicero, Seneca, Virgil, and Lucan. While noting the virtues of all, he took care to impress upon his hearers the importance of a great model, and grounded them first in Virgil and Homer, Cicero and Demosthenes, to whom he pointed as the supreme masters of expression. Horace he permitted, and Terence, but Ovid and Juvenal he considered unsuitable for schoolboys. Above

all he praised the beauty of an austere and chastened style. In the department of criticism, Vittorino, though representing a tendency of the age, passed in his actual achievement far beyond it. It was not many of his contemporaries who had quite so high an appreciation of the delicacies of literary form. As regards his methods of discipline, Vittorino was no Orbilius like that master whom Horace remembered with tears to his dying day—tears not of regret but of remembered pain. Vittorino did not beat offenders, or if he did, it was only in the last extremity. By way of punishment he used to make a transgressor kneel on the floor inside a chalk circle. He insisted upon decency in conduct and in language, and he succeeded to such an extent in overcoming the licentious manners of the age that his young men came to regard it as high treason, and even as a crime against affection, to transgress any of their master's rules.

Vittorino's pupils became profoundly attached to him, and their affection, as proved by their writings, amounted in many cases almost to worship. By its patronage of Vittorino the court of Mantua earned the distinction of becoming one of the foremost schools of Humanism. Personally Vittorino was a grave and reverend signor who inspired love and respect in every one who came under his influence. He carried on his great work to a good old age, and when he died in 1446 it was found that he had never used the liberality of the House of Gonzaga for his own benefit. He did not leave even the wherewithal to pay for his own funeral. Of late years, educationalists have returned to the ideals of Vittorino da Feltre as regards the importance of physical training, and though his influence on educational methods may certainly be modified with new requirements, it will never wholly pass away. Many of the primal and in themselves very beautiful results of the Renaissance hardly outlived the time of their blossoming, but the influence that radiated from the court at Mantua through the life and work of Vittorino remains.

We have remarked that Vittorino left no writings, for he preferred, as he said, to live in the lives of his pupils, but the Renaissance was prolific in works bearing upon theoretical education. The most highly specialised of these was Machiavelli's famous treatise *The Prince*, but that is in its aim more definitely political than scholastic. More important for our present purpose is the memorable letter of

the Piccolomini Pope, Aeneas Silvius, to Ladislas, the young King of Bohemia, who sought his advice on the matter of education. Pope Pius II. advised him on the importance of physical training, and to aim at implanting habits that would be beneficial during life. He must cultivate hardness and avoid sloth and overmuch sleep. The luxury of soft beds, the wearing of silk instead of linen, were condemned as enervating the body. The Pope dwells on the importance of gesture and carriage. A boy must be taught to walk erect, to look his fellows fearlessly in the face, and to bear himself with dignity. On this Pius II. quotes Chrysippus and Philip of Macedon. He urges the importance of games and exercises to develop the muscles and to promote the general health. Nor are military exercises forgotten. He reminds the young king that he must learn the use of the bow, the sling, and the spear, he must ride, drive, leap, and swim. He recommends him to read Virgil's account of the youth of the Itali. For very young children he recommends the ball and the hoop, and without knowing the proverb, the Pope says in effect 'that all work and no play make Jack a dull boy.' To Plato he goes for his justification of necessary rest. Like Vittorino, Pope Pius II. insists on the necessity of moderation in appetite, and he shows how gluttony hinders mental activity. A boy who is destined for a soldier's life must discipline himself to eat even beef. The remark is a curious sidelight on the dietetic ideals of the time. He does not spare the Bohemians' excess in the matter of strong liquors, but he counts on the young king's self-respect to save him from such indulgence. He appeals to the ancients for both good and bad examples in this respect, contrasting the abstemiousness of Augustus and Socrates with the grossness of Caligula, Nero, and Vitellius. The Greeks of the best age, he reminds his pupil, merely ate to live, and did not live to eat, for they recognised with Aristotle that as regards bodily pleasures we are no higher than the lower animals. He would have a boy brought up to avoid wine entirely. 'We must hold fast,' he says, 'to the dictum of Pythagoras, that he who pampers the body does but devise a prison for himself.'

The Pope now passes to the cultivation of the highest of all human endowments, the mind. He would not despise birth, wealth, fame, and bodily vigour and beauty, but they are accidents. The riches of the mind are not transient: they are unassailable by fortune,

calumny, or time. War that wastes material possessions can exact no requisition from personal worth. He would have Ladislas apply to his own case the famous question of Socrates to Gorgias: 'How I account the Great King happy until I can know what he can truly claim in character and in wisdom?' Pius II. anticipates much modern teaching in his succeeding words: 'Our one sure possession is character. Need I then impress upon you the importance of philosophy and of letters, without which, indeed, philosophy itself is barely intelligible? Literature is our guide to the true meaning of the past, to a right estimate of the present, to a sound forecast of the future.' He discusses the age at which a boy should begin to learn. The accepted seventh year may be good for formal training to begin, but certain of the ancients have urged the necessity of training under intelligent nurses even from infancy. Above all the Pope places the unconscious influence of the mother, who, like Cornelia of old, must instil by example a refined habit of speech and bearing.

With literature, Pius II. connected the lessons of religion, and in letters he found pre-eminently the lesson 'God before all else.' The prince must be obedient to the Church, but he must remember that while he is the Church's protector, the Church is not under his authority, wherein we see a reflection of the eternal warfare between the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire. Questions of conduct and the choice of companions are discussed with a clearness and a wisdom akin to that of Vittorino, but the Pope never forgets that he is speaking not to a mere intending scholar, but to a ruler with heavy responsibilities of government. Polite letters must not be neglected, but a prince must at the same time learn to speak the common dialects of his subjects, even as Mithridates could talk easily with his dependents, no matter from what province they hailed. The prince who must stand dumb before a subject is in a lamentable position. As Homer said, 'Silence is becoming in a woman, but in a man, and that man a king, standing before his people, it is rather a shame and a disgrace.' Not only must the king be able to speak, but he must be able to speak well. Expression, and even elegant expression, must be his first care. He must choose the word that will exactly express his feeling, yet without pedantry. Let him read the pagan poets, beginning with Homer and Virgil, and he must not be deterred by any shallow 'Churchman' who would denounce

such studies as waste of time. The Pope was a little more liberal than Vittorino in his choice of authors. He even permits Ovid and within certain limitations Juvenal; the elegiac poets he condemns as enervating. The prince must practise the art of letter-writing, and must pay attention to caligraphy. It was no great credit to Alfonso of Aragon that his signature was like the traces of a worm crawling over the paper. Here we note the rise of the feeling which made it not unworthy for the soldier to be also a learned clerk.

It is curiously indicative of the precosity of children of the time that these weighty remarks were addressed to a boy of twelve. The children of that age seemed to do advanced work earlier than we would think at all advisable nowadays, and many of the brilliant lives of the Renaissance had ended their full and crowded hours even before youth was well past. Such a vivid young life was that of the brilliant Conradine, who seemed to have passed through all the emotions of manhood when he was executed at the age of eighteen. The youth whom Pope Pius II. thus counselled died also at the age of eighteen, but he, unlike Conradine, left but little record of glory or achievement.

PORTRAIT OF A MEMBER OF THE GONZAGA FAMILY

(*In the Pitti Palace, Florence*)

This fine portrait, now in the Pitti Palace, Florence, represents one of the members of the Gonzaga family who were introduced in the famous frescoes by Mantegna that adorned the Camera degli Sposi and other apartments in the Castello of Mantua.

CHAPTER XV

THE HOUSE OF BORGIA

'Only the narrowest observer, blind to everything save their infamous deeds, can depict the Borgias simply as cruel and savage brutes. . . . Like many other potentates of their age, they were privileged malefactors,'—F. GREGOROVIUS.

ONE of the chief difficulties in writing of the Renaissance is to select from the conflicting views that prevail on all sides the facts that seem undeniable, and to formulate with the help of these facts conclusions that appear reasonably fair and, above aught else, dispassionate. Italy was in a sense the leading country of the Renaissance, but when we turn to the question of the Reformation, with which it is so closely allied, we find the storm-centre has shifted to Germany, and that the success of the Reformation in England was due not to the justice or merits of Luther and his followers, but to the inexorable will of King Henry VIII. and Thomas Cromwell, the first of whom would doubtless have remained a staunch supporter of the Pope had it suited his purpose so to do. Turning to Italy, we must remember that, then at least, there could be no doubt about the statement made hundreds of years later, that it was not a country so much as a geographical expression. It was divided into Republics, Royal Duchies, Papal States, the Regno (Sicily, Sardinia and the Islands) ruled by the House of Aragon from Naples; and, in addition to all these divisions, there were independent cities held as fiefs and governed by rulers who were called Tyrants and often justified the modern significance of the term.

Under these conditions, which prevailed throughout the years when the Renaissance flowered, Italy was of course divided against itself, and to make that division effective rulers sought for alliances, not only at home but abroad; while great houses like those of the Orsini and Colonna, for example, which often played a tempestuous part in both political and religious affairs, maintained large companies of soldiers of fortune—mercenaries whose swords were at the service

of the highest bidder. Taking these conditions into account, it is not difficult to see why, when a strong man appeared upon the scene, whether the sword he carried was for sacred or secular service, he roused a host of enemies, who would not hesitate to attack him in his public and his private life. Succeeding generations have accepted attack or defence according as it justifies best their political or their religious prejudices. And though a large number of distinguished men, such as Martin Luther and Fra Girolamo Savonarola, have lived down the reputation conferred upon them by their enemies, there remains in the case of many others a certain conflict of evidence, a call for careful scrutiny that is not always justified by its results. An unpleasant feeling must prevail that the last word remains to be spoken, the last document to be investigated, and that even then certain difficulties will remain unsolved, because private letters and state documents alike reflect as much as anything the *parti pris* of the writers. After all, the ambassadors were men with vivid prejudices of their own and definite parts to play, and one would not be more justified in taking their conclusions literally than in accepting the place of a prominent party politician in this country's history from the comments upon his actions in a contemporary party paper, whether for or against.

These conclusions are a very necessary preliminary to the discussion of any great family that achieved distinction in Renaissance times. They have a special claim, if the family chosen be, as it is here, the House of Borgia, for in this case we have the Spanish root struck in Italian soil. Spanish characteristics assert themselves in an alien land, provoking and bearing down opposition, and creating such an outburst of protest and condemnation that it becomes necessary to sift the Borgian legend most carefully, and to give to the figures that stand out most vividly in Renaissance history the benefit of any doubts that may arise. Even then Pope Alexander and Prince Cæsar must remain sinister figures, but Lucrezia becomes more sinned against than sinning, and the worst crimes of her relatives are explained, though not justified, by the times in which they lived, years in which great personalities could thrive almost without restraint.

There can be no doubt that the conditions of life in the Renaissance was specially favourable to the development of certain

families. The few that came to the highest places and managed to retain them had all the qualities that make for success in years of supreme physical and mental elation. The growth of money kings in our days is as much the fruit of the years as the growth of the Medici and the Borgia was in the time of the Renaissance, or the rise of Napoleon in the years immediately following the Revolution in France. But the Medici flourished on their own soil. The Borgia, transplanted on to Italian ground, would seem to have hoped at one time to retain the Keys of St. Peter for their inheritance, and though they fell far below this grandiose aim, the fact remains that in little over a hundred years the house produced two Popes, a saint and general of the Jesuits, Cæsar Borgia and Lucrezia.

The house, first known as Borja, took its rise probably in Aragon in the eleventh century, and first came into prominence when Alfonso de Borja, Bishop of Valencia, became Pope Calixtus III. at the advanced age of seventy-seven. He was elected in April 1455, at a time when the Orsini and Colonna were all-powerful in the councils of the Church, and doubtless owed his high place to his age and his amiable weaknesses; but he cut no poor figure in his great office, and by proclaiming the crusade against the Turk created a very favourable impression, not increased when he raised to the rank of cardinal two of his own nephews, Don Luis and Don Roderigo. To be sure he overlooked in his nepotism the claims of his bastard son, Don Francisco, but he made yet another nephew, a brother of the famous Cardinal Roderigo, Duke of Spoleto, castellan of all pontifical fortresses, governor of many cities, and prefect of Rome, with the intention of raising him to still higher offices. But before these plans could take effect Calixtus III. was smitten with his last illness, the Orsini revolted against the Spaniards who were disgracing the Holy City, the prefect of Rome fled, and died a little more than a month after his uncle. Calixtus III. must be held to have established the power of the Borgia in Rome; he was a man of great ideas that old age was powerless to keep in abeyance. He had the measure of statecraft that was to stand all his family in good stead, and though he did nothing to encourage the revival of learning, the charges brought against him of selling rare manuscripts would seem to be unfounded, and to be based upon the fact that he did sell the gold and silver ornaments that were part of the binding of these works,

in order to raise more money for the crusade against the Turk. He even pawned the Papal jewels to this end, and reduced his own household expenses to very modest limits. Undoubtedly he brought many Catalans to Rome, and they were not very praiseworthy representatives of their race. But for his time Calixtus III. was no bad Pope, and had he not raised to the cardinalate his nephew Roderigo Borgia, the house might have died out in Italy for lack of a favourable environment, and history might have left a most perplexing chapter unwritten. But in 1458 Cardinal Roderigo was seven-and-twenty, enormously strenuous, capable and ambitious, already possessed of a policy, wealthy enough to be patient in its pursuit, and quite aware of the truth that the Spaniards were unpopular in Rome, and that the only effective substitute for popularity is power.

Those who would be successful must bide their time, and those who would be served must give service. Looking back at the early history of Roderigo Borgia—for the old Spanish spelling Borja may now be laid aside—it seems clear that he set himself to work very steadily and with great ability to capture the Triple Crown, conscious that time was on his side and that the means were in his hands. He could afford to wait; his uncle's gifts and promotion had made him wealthy; he could afford to pay, and he had the skill requisite to make him indispensable to any one who should occupy St. Peter's chair. On the death of his aged relative, Calixtus III., the cardinals elected the Lord Cardinal of Siena, who chose to be called Pius II. In his election he was greatly aided by Cardinal Roderigo, who had few friends in the Conclave save the new Pope and the Cardinal-Archdeacon Prospero Colonna. The young cardinal was clever enough to seize the moment when the issue of accession to the Papacy hung between Cardinal d'Estouteville and Cardinal Enea Silvio of Siena, and, at the right moment, to throw what became to all intents and purposes a casting vote. This was an astute move, and one that was fruitful in reward. Cardinal Roderigo was so strongly placed and so necessary to the councils of the Vatican that the Pope did no more than remonstrate with him by letter, and in kind and paternal fashion, for the undisputed irregularity of his private life. But though he became the acknowledged father of several illegitimate children, it is fair to remember that in the fifteenth century these occurrences reflected comparatively little odium

upon any of the parties concerned; and the Pope himself is said to have remarked that if there were good reasons why the clergy should live celibate lives, there were still better and stronger arguments in favour of their marriage. Throughout the brief years of this Pope's reign, Cardinal Roderigo was in constant attendance upon him, and was promoted to the position of Vice-Chancellor-Cardinal-Archdeacon. He was with the Pope in August 1464, when Pius died in Ancona, where he had gone to bid his Crusaders God-speed, but being taken with a fever, Roderigo was unable to be present at the Conclave that resulted in the election of Pietro Barbo, Cardinal of Venice, who is named Paul II. Another seven years of spade-work followed, Cardinal Borgia being entrusted with great missions and universally esteemed, though the number of his illegitimate children was beginning to exceed what was considered reasonable even for a high dignitary of the Church.

Pope Paul II. died in 1471, and again Cardinal Borgia was largely responsible for the election of his successor, Cardinal Francesco della Rovere, who is known as Pope Sixtus IV. By way of reward the cardinal received the Abbey of Subiaco *in commendam*. He was made a bishop and at once raised to the rank of Cardinal-Bishop of Albano while retaining the office of Vice-Chancellor, and he built himself a huge palace in Rome, of which a part remains to this day in the possession of the Sforza-Cæsarini family. He was sent to Spain to preach the crusade, and on his return took under his protection Madonna Giovanna de' Catanei, a lady who had the comparative disadvantage of having a husband alive. She became in 1474 the mother of Cæsar Borgia, the question of whose paternity is held by some to be a matter for doubt. While the cardinal was doubtless enamoured of his mother, who was to become the mother of Gioffredo, Lucrezia, and Gian Francesco Borgia, there is a theory that Cæsar was the son of Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, a nephew of Pope Sixtus IV., the life-long enemy of Cardinal Roderigo, and in years to come the 'Terrible Pontiff,' Julius II. There can be no doubt that the cardinal in later years lavished the greatest honours within his gift upon his son Gian Francesco, and this gives abundant colour to the generally accepted theory that when the unfortunate lad was murdered, his brother, or half-brother Cæsar Borgia, was responsible. Gian Francesco was born in 1475, and Lucrezia Borgia

three years later. Pope Sixtus IV. was too deeply indebted to Cardinal Borgia to concern himself with these irregularities. In fact, he went so far as to confer honours upon Cæsar Borgia, to whom he sent the Apostolic Benediction when the boy was but six years old, together with a dispensation to save him from the necessity of proving his legitimacy, thereby rendering him eligible to receive office under the Church. While this is advanced by some as sufficient proof that Cæsar must have been a son of the cardinal, it is only fair to recollect that Cardinal della Rovere, being the Pope's nephew, was consequently nearer the throne in blood if not in service than the Spanish cardinal. When Cæsar was no more than eight years old, he was made Canon of Valencia and, at the age of ten, treasurer of the Cathedral of Cartagena in Spain.

Sixtus IV. died in 1484, and was succeeded by Cardinal Cibo under the title of Innocent VIII. In his pontificate, Cardinal Borgia withdrew himself from active service. He continued to hold splendid and remunerative appointments, but it is clear that he sought now to husband his resources, for the time was approaching when his ambitions were to find full development, and even the highest honours in Christendom had their price. In 1485 Giovanna Catanei's husband died. She married again a year later, and her association with Cardinal Borgia ceased. She was succeeded in his favours by the beautiful Julia Farnese, whose brother Alexander became Pope Paul III. By Cardinal Roderigo she had a daughter, Laura, who was adopted by her husband, when, in later years, she married. Pope Innocent VIII. acknowledged seven of his own illegitimate children, and from this simple fact the morality of the closing years of the fifteenth century may be estimated. But for all its lapses from modern standards, those years in which Leonardo da Vinci and Mantegna and other great men flourished were full of interest and of beauty, though law and order can hardly be said to have existed.

In 1492 Innocent VIII. being in an extremely feeble state, three boys were bled to death by his physician, in the hope that their blood might rejuvénate His Holiness. But the cure failed, and on the 25th July the tolling of the great bell on the Capitol announced that St. Peter's throne was vacant once again, and Cardinal Borgia, now approaching his sixtieth year, saw the hour when his ambitions must be realised or altogether fail.

Twenty-three cardinals attended the Conclave of August 1492, and but for the action of King Charles VIII. of France, who is said to have sent two hundred thousand ducats to Rome to buy the votes of cardinals for his nominee, Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, it is unlikely that the Conclave would have lasted as long as it did. Three days passed before Cardinal Roderigo's colleagues, of whom it is said at least eighteen had been bought, hailed him as Pope and Vicar of Christ with the title of Alexander VI. His gifts to Cardinal Orsini, to Cardinal Colonna, to Cardinal Ascanio Sforza-Visconti, to Cardinal Riarjo Savelli and others are on record, and they prove beyond doubt that he bought the Triple Crown in the highest market. But he had enormous wealth; for nearly forty years he had been in the service of the Church, and though his path was beset by difficulties he was undoubtedly the man of his age to deal with them. Cautious, far-seeing, full of a mixture of dignity and arrogance and free from any approach to sentiment, he was a diplomat to his finger-tips, and gifted with ambitions destined to be felt throughout civilised Europe. One of the first acts of his reign was to restore order to Rome, where, under the weak rule of his immediate predecessor, lawlessness had thriven to an extent almost without precedent. He created some resentment in Spain by the tolerant treatment he meted out to the Jews expelled by Torquemada, but made his peace with his native land by giving the New World, just discovered by Christopher Columbus, to Ferdinand and Isabella. The discovery of America is, of course, a disputed point. There is reason to believe that Norsemen had reached its shores long before Columbus, John Cabot, or Amerigo Vespucci, but there was no question of that kind before Europe in 1492. If Spain still continued to complain that the Jews were suffered to live in Italy, it was chiefly to gain diplomatic ends; and it must be remembered that Pope Alexander had to enter far into European politics, because so many were the divisions of Italy that it was always easy for the Powers to stir up trouble at the gates of Rome.

Alexander VI. was a born intriguer, gifted with enormous belief in his own powers and in the strength of his own position. He knew to a nicety how far he could go and to whom he must make concession, and he was able to strengthen himself by the use of his undisputed right to make cardinals and to confer appointments.

Rome in the days of his pontificate was largely in the hands of two factions, the Orsini representing the Guelphs and the Colonna representing the Ghibellines. At first Alexander allied himself to the Orsini, and drove out from Pesaro, Rimini, and Faenza the chiefs of the Colonna faction. There is no space in this brief record to tell how these things were done, or of the part that Cæsar Borgia played in them; but when we look back at the history of the times, it seems clear that Alexander's intention was to make away with both factions, and having rid himself of one with the aid of the other, to crush that other in turn. This explains the attack upon Urbino and the suppression of the Vitelli and Baglioni. Those who defend him—and even Alexander VI. has not lacked defenders—must confess that he was at best non-moral in political life and immoral in private. But it is unlikely that he is responsible for all the crimes that have been laid to his charge. Cæsar Borgia, on the other hand, lacked an apologist until last year, and failed then to find a successful one (Rafael Sabatini), and if Alexander hoped, as some hold, to establish a Borgia Dynasty in the Vatican, his hopes were destined to be dashed. He raised his illegitimate son, Gian Francesco, at the age of twenty-two to the dukedom of Gandia and a princedom, and in honour of this, on the 14th of June 1497, Madonna de' Catanei gave a supper party at which the young duke and his brother Cæsar, now twenty-three years of age and Cardinal-Deacon of Santa Maria Nuova since he was nineteen, were present. The two went away together when supper was over, and the duke is said to have left his brother and to have gone attended by a masked man and one other servant in the direction of the Jews' quarter. He was never seen alive again. No inquiry was made until the night of the following day, because it was supposed that the young duke, who was already married and the father of two children, had gone to some place where his discovery would create scandal. But as soon as the alarm was raised, a fisherman came to the Vatican with news that he had seen a dead man supported on a horse brought to the banks of the Tiber and thrown in. He explained that he had not given notice of it before, because such an event was of common occurrence. A little later the body with a dozen wounds was recovered from the river. The whole affair is full of mystery. It is clear that the Pope suffered a grievous shock, and that for a time

at least he sought to reform both the Church and himself; but he would not appear to have held Cæsar Borgia responsible for the crime, since he sent him on a state mission to Naples, and does not seem to have ceased to show every confidence in him. In the following year the Pope was able to rid himself of Fra Girolamo Savonarola, who was hanged in Florence.

In the year 1500 Don Alfonso of Aragon, second husband of Lucrezia Borgia, was murdered, and this is another of the crimes for which the Pope and Cæsar Borgia were held responsible. By this time Cæsar had long left the Church, and as Duke of Valentinois was carrying out by force of arms, often in hideously cruel fashion, the Papal policy which was now clearly seen to aim at nothing else than the establishment of a Borgia Dynasty that should unite the sacred and the secular rule. Though the policy failed, it led to the establishment by Pope Julius II. of the Papal States, which only ceased to exist in the second half of the last century.

In 1503, when the Pope was seventy-two years of age, and the youngest of his illegitimate children, the Duke of Nepi, was five, there was an outbreak of the plague in Rome, and in August of that year the Pope and Cæsar Borgia went together to take supper with the Bishop of Modena in his villa outside the walls of Rome. The supper party was given on the 5th of the month, and on the 18th Cæsar was lying ill and Pope Alexander was dead. Rumour, which cannot be treated as though it were the truth, even though it may not be disregarded altogether, says that the Pope had decided to poison the Bishop of Modena, and had bribed one of his servants to place poison in his wine to that end, but that the servant informed his master and, for a sufficient consideration, administered the poison to his guests. Cæsar, having a splendid constitution, survived, while the Pope, who was old and had been suffering from the extreme heat, succumbed. The next Pope, Pius III., reigned but two months, and then Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, who became Pope Julius II., broke the power of the House of Borgia by depriving Cæsar of his great possessions and putting him in prison, from which he escaped to find military service elsewhere in Italy and die fighting.

So faded those unsubstantial visions of a ruling house, that cost so much human misery and bloodshed and for centuries had made the name of the second Borgia Pope and his alleged son Cæsar

the types of universal infamy, that tainted even the fame of Lucrezia Borgia, who, as has been pointed out elsewhere, would seem to have been more sinned against than sinning, and in the last years of her life at least devoted herself to good works. But the House of Borgia was not destined to pass out of history leaving nothing better than a hideous memory. It had produced a superman among sinners, now it was destined to produce a saint, a great-grandson of Alexander VI. and grandson of the unfortunate Duke of Gandia, whose murdered body was rescued from the Tiber.

In dealing with the life of Francesco Borgia, who was born in 1510, we find the record of alleged miracles, and the significance of this should not be overlooked, for these miracles speak as eloquently of the elevation of righteousness in the popular mind as Pope Alexander's record speaks of the elevation of sin. In each case there was doubtless an enormous exaggeration, and if the present state of our knowledge compels us to dismiss the purely miraculous side of Francesco Borgia's life, it should lead us no less to look askance at the tales of horror and infamy associated with the great Borgia Pope. In all human probability exaggeration has been at work in both cases.

Don Francesco Borgia was the eldest son of Gian Borgia, son of the murdered Duke of Gandia, and was brought up in Saragossa by his uncle, the Archbishop Don Juan of Aragon. At the age of eighteen, one year after the Sack of Rome, he entered the court of the Emperor Charles V., and in 1529 married Doña Leonora of Portugal, and was created Marquis of Lombay. It seems clear that the story of the infamies of Alexander VI. was not very widespread in those days, for, as late as 1531, we find the Pope (Clement VII.) giving to the House of Borgia, represented by the marquis and his father, five privileges in perpetuity. It is unnecessary to detail them here, for their twentieth-century value is small. But it is evident that Francesco Borgia, by his honourable life and his devotion to high ideals, had already made a very favourable impression among those high dignitaries with whom he lived. In 1536 he accompanied the Emperor Charles V. on those campaigns in Provence and Algiers that resulted so disastrously for the Imperial legions, and three years later, when he was in his twenty-ninth year, the great change in his life was brought about. The Empress died and the Marquis

of Lombay was instructed to take the coffin with her remains to Elvira for burial. There it was his duty to open the coffin that he might testify to the identity of what it contained, and the sight would appear to have had an extraordinary effect upon him—extraordinary because he had seen fighting, and could hardly have been unfamiliar with death in its most appalling aspects. Could he have forgotten till then that death is no respecter of persons and that corruption is not a courtier? It is impossible to say, but the fact remains that he was a changed man when the unpleasant mission was at an end.

The Emperor appointed him to be Viceroy of Catalonia, and for four years he devoted himself to his task there with enormous success, restoring order, making peace, encouraging honesty, repressing vice, and there he met the Jesuit Father Aroaz, who preached before him and spoke much of that wonderful man Ignatius Loyola, who had founded the brotherhood.

Strangely dramatic, even in those stirring times, was the first meeting, some fifteen years earlier, between Ignatius Loyola and the Marquis of Lombay. In his little-known *Life of St. Ignatius*, a work compact of fine thought and brilliant phrase, the late Francis Thompson has thus described the scene. The occasion was the arrest of Ignatius at Alcalá:—'When the saint returned from Segovia, no charge vouchsafed, he was laid by the heels in prison. As the procession passed, it had to make way for a very different procession: the dignitaries of the town doing its honours to the young Marquis of Lombay, son of the Duke of Gandia. Little did the marquis dream that the poor prisoner was his future Father and General, for the Marquis of Lombay was Francis Borgia. Strange, even among the many strange ironies in this ironic life!'

So impressed was the marquis that he entered into correspondence with Loyola while he was in Catalonia, where he resigned his office in 1543 to take up his dukedom of Gandia, and the office of Master of the Household to the Infanta Maria of Portugal, who was betrothed to one of the Emperor's sons. When she died the duke obtained leave to retire to his estates, and in 1546 we hear of the first miracle. The duchess was sick and he was praying for her recovery before a crucifix. He told his confessor that the figure on the cross spoke to him, offering to grant

a further term of life to his wife, but warning him that it was not wise to accept the offer. The duke committed his wife to the wisdom of Providence, and she died. Full of religious zeal, he started to build a college for the Jesuits, whose Order he joined in 1548, acting secretly by the direction of Loyola, who told him to set his house in order, marry and endow his children, and so prepare to renounce the world. He met the great man who directed the Jesuits in 1550, in the year when Pope Paul III. (whose sister Julia had been a mistress of his great-grandfather Alexander VI.) offered to name him cardinal. This offer was refused, and in 1551, by permission of the Emperor Charles V., the Duke of Gandia resigned all his high titles and offices, provided for his children, and became plain Father Francesco Borgia of the Society of Jesus. He dwelt for a while in a wooden cell at Oñate, performing the most menial tasks at the bidding of the Superior, living in the very simplest fashion, and, according to the popular belief, working miracles. Then he was sent into Portugal to make the Order known, and he refused another offer, this time from Pope Julius III., to raise him to the cardinalate. In Portugal he was said to have healed the sick and raised the dead, and his Society made him Provincial of Spain and India, with the further title of Father and Founder of the Company of Jesus in Spain and Portugal. It was said that he was under the special protection of the Celestial Hierarchy; and once in Valladolid, when the collegians to whom he was preaching were without food, an old man, accompanied by a very beautiful child, appeared at the gates of the establishment bearing baskets of provision, and then disappeared, no man knew whither. The two were said by the people to have been St. Andrew and an Angel. Ignatius Loyola died in 1556 and was succeeded by Padre Jago de Laynez, and two years later, the great Emperor Charles V. being on his death-bed, sent for Francesco Borgia to comfort his last hours. It was impossible to cover the intervening distance in the time, but the traveller was able to preach the funeral sermon, and under the direct orders of his Superior accepted the high office of Executor to the Imperial Estates. Two years later he was in Oporto at the time of the great eclipse of the sun and was powerful enough to calm the terror-stricken populace. One year after this, the head of the Jesuits was summoned to the Council of Trent, and Francesco Borgia

became Vicar-General and remained in Rome until Padre Jago de Laynez died, when he was elected to the full rank of General. Of his labours in the service of the cause there is ample record. He would appear to have neglected nothing but himself, and to have remained in Rome for some six years, when at the instance of the Pope he went on an embassy to France, Spain, and Portugal to preach the Crusade. The stress and strain of this journey were altogether too great for his enfeebled frame, and he returned to Rome to die, at the age of sixty-two, on the 1st of October of the following year.

His canonisation was but a matter of time. In 1617 his remains, less one arm which was deliberately left in Rome, were taken to Madrid, and in 1671 he was entered upon the roll of saints by Pope Urban VIII.

This was the expiring effort of the House of Borgia, though many of the saints' descendants are aptly said to have 'withered in sumptuous obscurity,' and the last in a direct line died childless in 1882, relinquishing at death three princedoms, eight dukedoms, with many other titles: he was ten times grandee of Spain. Another line of the Borgia House still exists, and the family in its many branches has seen life under various aspects, one Bartholomeo Borgia, who was born in 1818 and died in 1877, having been an author and a shoemaker. The whole significance of the family lies in the capacity it manifested to take such advantage of the Renaissance, and to show itself equally able to rise to supreme acts of self-abnegation as well as to sink to the lowest depths of infamy. It is but one of several houses that manifested a like capacity, and not the least significant characteristic of the Renaissance is the vitality it infused into great families that, but for its inspiration, might have passed away leaving the pages of history blank.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MEDICI AND RENAISSANCE FLORENCE

INSEPARABLY interwoven with the foregoing studies, the great and powerful family of the Medici, which enjoys a distinction in Renaissance history rivalled only by the Borgia, now claims a separate consideration. The two houses present in many respects a curious parallel. Both rose to power by their talents, they played an equally distinguished part in Italian statecraft, each house gave two Popes to the Church, the Borgia sending to Peter's chair Calixtus III. and Alexander VI., the Medici Leo X. and Clement VII. In Alexander and Leo the Papacy attained its greatest worldly magnificence, and in the former its deepest infamy. Under both these pontiffs everything that was most distinctive of what we are pleased to call the Renaissance found encouragement, and if in the patronage of art they were surpassed by Julius II., Alexander and Leo were the best friends that Italian scholars had known since the days of Nicholas V. Alexander, it is true, was content to be a patron, Leo was himself most perfectly accomplished in humane learning. But while the Medici have their own share of unscrupulousness to answer for, they wrote a cleaner page of history than the Borgia. For all its genius, the Spanish house has left a record stained on every page by lust, cruelty, and crime, but that of the Medici is sweetened by learning, by poetry, by the advancement of civil well-being in their native Florence. Hardly a chapter of the Medici annals but is a chapter in the history of intellectual progress. Florence is the typical city of the re-birth of thought—we do not say free-thought; for that is an ambiguous phrase, and thought, to be thought at all, must be free—Florence and the Medici from the time of Cosimo are one, they developed on parallel lines, they reacted subtly upon each other, until the city reflected her princes and her princes the city. Lorenzo the Magnificent was in his life and work the microcosm of that gay yet strenuous, careless yet thoughtful,

quick, intelligent, gallant, practical, impious, and on occasion religious, Etrurian capital.

The origin of the Medici family, like that of every distinguished house, has afforded an opportunity to the makers of myths. It has been said that their ancestors were famous in the time of Charlemagne, but these stories are the mere attempts of industrious chroniclers to add to the after-glories of the line. None of the accounts is earlier than 1580, when the family had passed its zenith.[1] The first trustworthy notice is that of Giovanni de' Medici, who, in the year 1351, with only one hundred men, forced his way through the Milanese army before Scarparia, and took the place with a loss of only twenty lives. The next mention is that of Salvestro, an opponent of aristocratic tyranny, who was elected chief magistrate of Florence in 1379. He checked the nobles in a flagrant abuse of power, by which they excluded from office persons whom they accused arbitrarily of favouring the Ghibelline party. Salvestro's reform, however, was not effected without riot and bloodshed. Several nobles were killed in the tumult. His son, Veri, held high rank in the republic and enjoyed a great popularity.

These figures are, however, important only as foreshadowing the political ability of the house and its talent for leadership. Its real founder is another Giovanni, the great-grandfather of Lorenzo the Magnificent. He was a keen man of business, and it was under him that the Medici secured its reputation for vast wealth. But he incurred none of the jealousies that beset the very rich. His amiability and justice made him respected and even loved. Unambitious himself, he was carried to the highest office by the goodwill of Florence. Dying at a great age, he bade his two sons, Cosimo and Lorenzo, serve all persons to the best of their ability. That, he said, had been his only endeavour. He had clear ideas, far in advance of his time, of constitutional principles. He advised his sons, if they were ambitious of public honours, to accept only such offices of state as were bestowed by the laws and the favour of their fellow-citizens. He warned them of the consequences of power seized by violence.

Giovanni's elder son, Cosimo, has already figured in these pages. With him the earlier history of Humanism is inseparably bound up;

[1] See Roscoe on an MS. in the Riccardi Library, *Life of Lorenzo de M.*

we have seen how he combined the life of commerce with that of the intellect, and how he schemed to bring the political destinies of Florence into his own hand. He was unjustly accused of having seized the best property of Balthasar Cossa, Pope John XXIII., whom he accompanied to the Council of Constance and befriended on his deposition, but this story is the invention of enemies. Cosimo never deserted a friend, he was faithful to Balthasar in his misfortunes, and had him restored to the Sacred College as cardinal with first right of precedence. As for the story of misappropriation, John XXIII. left hardly enough money to pay his debts and discharge his legacies. Any sharp practice the Medici may have used was not in the way of robbing the dead. Cosimo's method was different. He laid the living under obligations and then used them as political instruments. He did not oppress or harry his debtors. He merely suggested with his gentle courtesy the inevitable doctrine of *quid pro quo*. He lent freely, and at last could do almost exactly as he pleased with Florentines and Florentine affairs. Mindful of his father's advice, he never played the despot, but he became, in effect, the first tyrant of Florence. It cannot be denied that he used his influence to good ends, and even as a money-lender he was generous. Integrity, according to the letter of the commercial law, marked the dealings of the Medici bank, the chief financial house of Europe, to which kings came for the sinews of war. Their gains were not ill-gotten. 'No family,' says Voltaire, 'ever obtained its power by so just a title.' They owed their success to genius backed by industry. And the mainspring of the whole machine was Cosimo himself. His counting-house was his real throne of government. He gave the minutest personal attention to detail, and, had his commercial genius as well as his taste for letters descended to his meteoric grandson Lorenzo, the place of Florence in Italian history would have been even greater than it is. Mention has already been made of Cosimo's relations with the other states of Italy, and of his magistracy in Florence, his temporary exile to Venice, so fruitful for the artistic and literary development of his native city, of his return and of his old age, devoted to furthering the welfare of the city, and to the revival of the Platonic philosophy. He died in 1464 at the age of seventy-five, sincerely mourned by the republic, whose clearer-sighted citizens looked apprehensively to the future, now that the

THE "ANNUNCIATION," BY FRA LIPPO LIPPI

This charming lunette and its companion, "St John the Baptist and Six Saints," were painted for the decoration of an apartment in the Riccardi Palace, by order of Cosimo de' Medici, whose crest—three feathers in a ring—is introduced in the stucco ornamentation of the balustrade. They were painted about 1438, towards the end of Fra Filippo's first Florentine period, and show far greater richness of colour and better management of light than his earlier known works at the Florence Academy. It has been suggested that this picture and the "Seven Saints" were the very panels on which Filippo Lippi was at work when he effected his romantic escape from Cosimo's palace, which is the subject of Browning's well-known poem.

Pater Patriæ was gone. The dying Cosimo himself had not been without misgivings as to his successors, for his son Giovanni, in whom he had placed his hopes, was dead, and his other son Piero was an invalid, quite unequal to the burden of statecraft. There was, however, a grandson, who was to make the name of Florence greater than Cosimo had dreamed.

Here, although it belongs strictly to the question of art, we may glance aside for a moment from the family history, to note what Cosimo had done for the outward splendour of Florence. He spent enormous sums on public buildings. He rebuilt the Church of San Lorenzo, his own magnificent palace was the work of Michellozo, who drew the designs in competition with Brunelleschi. Under Cosimo's encouragement, Brunelleschi raised the dome of the cathedral, and Ghiberti wrought for the Baptistery those bronze gates which Michael Angelo said were worthy to be the gates of Paradise. Masaccio, who was now giving to painting a vitality absent from the designs of Giotto, found in Cosimo his most liberal friend and protector. His principal works were done for the chapel of the Brancacci. Masaccio's pupil, Fra Lippo Lippi, was another protégé of the Medici. In Cosimo's time Florence began to realise the dream of Pericles for Athens, when he sought by artistic ornament to make her 'a means of education for the whole of Greece.'

As regards his foreign policy, for so his relations with the neighbouring Italian states may be called without inappropriateness, Cosimo was a vital force. He crippled Naples, when Alfonso joined with Venice against Florence, by calling in the huge sums Naples owed him. Alliance with the Medici was coveted by the other Italian states, for he was believed to bring them luck in overcoming their enemies. Cosimo aided Venice against Milan and France; the loss of his support left her powerless. Thus he held in his hands the main threads of Italian politics, and played with other states as his pawns. But he used his power graciously, and knew the value of conciliation. He was less brilliant than his grandson, but he united the graces of culture with the shrewdness of the hard-headed citizen. He is essentially the burgher type, but the burgher type in its highest development. Lorenzo, of the third generation, is an aristocrat, infinitely more sensitive, more polished, and more accomplished than his grandfather, but with the patrician's in-

stability and impatience of mere bourgeois pursuits. Cosimo knew how to combine the prince with the merchant: Lorenzo was the prince *in excelsis*.

He is a curious study in heredity. Every trait of his immediate forbears, except Cosimo's business talent, reappears refined and developed in Lorenzo. He had his grandfather's love of intellectual culture and his subtlety in politics, though it was subtlety of a more mercurial kind. His literary sense, too, was moulded to a fineness almost feminine by the influence of his mother, Lucrezia Tornabuoni, one of the most gifted women of her age; a scholar, a writer, and the patroness of learning. From his invalid father, Piero, he derived a certain weakness, not of body but of will, which is in strange contrast to Cosimo's iron inflexibility. From his father he also inherited the love of letters, for Piero, despite continued ill-health, was during his short headship of the family a liberal patron of learning. In early boyhood Lorenzo showed those essentially princely characteristics which marked his maturity. He was naturally inclined to be lavish, not merely from generosity, but because he loved to act handsomely. In that he would endure no rivalry. When he was only a boy he received a present of a horse from Sicily. This gift he repaid with one of far greater value, and on being reproved for extravagance, he said that there was nothing more glorious than to overcome others in acts of generosity. Here he betrayed something like a love of display for its own sake. Yet he was generous also in the best sense. Fabroni tells us that he thought nothing more distressing than depressed and afflicted worth, and that he was particularly kind to the poor. Yet he was Cosimo's grandson in the strong good sense he brought not only to his acts of liberality but to his statesmanship.

It was inevitable that his education should be in accordance with the traditions of his house. His father and mother set him early in the path of Humanism, he learned much from the wise old Platonist, his grandfather, whom he had with him till he was sixteen. While still in his teens he began to write poetry. His regular studies were superintended by Gentile d'Urbino, Cristofero Landino, and Argyropoulos himself. The last taught him Aristotle; in Plato his tutor was Marsilio Ficino. We have already seen the importance of these names in the history of the Revival of Learning. The work of

Cosimo, who encouraged all these men, seems to have focused itself on the education of his grandson. The result was that Lorenzo became the most typical Humanist of his time. He was not a great critic, commentator, or translator as his tutors were; he produced no monumental work, but remained a cultivated man of the world, who used his learning as an auxiliary. His knowledge, though not professional, was sound, and Landino in after years often took his pupil's advice on points connected with his own work. Lorenzo personified the genius of Renaissance Florence. In him the return to a joyous paganism, to an intensely æsthetic view of life as a fine art, found its most delicate expression. The Florentine love of pageantry, no new thing, was indulged by Lorenzo to an extent hitherto undreamed of. At the famous tournament of 1468, the young Lorenzo was victor, winning a silver helmet with a figure of Mars on the crest. A great portion of his success was due to his talent for adapting himself to his contemporaries. He was 'supreme over his circle, not . . . through the princely position which he occupied, but rather through the wonderful taste he displayed in giving perfect freedom of action to the many and varied natures which surrounded him.'[1]

Such were the main characteristics of the man who on the 3rd of December 1469, the day of Piero's death, became head of the Medici family. During his father's short tenure of that position, Lorenzo, though scarcely out of his teens, had taken some hand in the affairs of the republic. At the moment of his father's death he was within one month of completing his twenty-second year, but the youth had made so good an impression upon his fellow-citizens that on December 4 a deputation of leading Florentines waited upon him and asked him to undertake the public position held by his father and grandfather. It was an office without exact definition or title, for the Medici considered it 'of more importance to be great than to appear to be so.' Already the heads of the house were princes in all but name, and the reality of their position is sufficiently proved by the fact that several of the Italian states sent special embassies to assure Lorenzo of their friendship. For the moment the Florentine deputies merely requested him to undertake 'the administration and care of the republic.' He accepted, and a year later he was formally appointed syndic of Florence.

[1] Burckhardt, *Civ. of the R.*, vol. ii. p. 148, ed. 1878.

He had not been two years in power before his splendour had begun to impress his contemporaries. The visit of the Duke of Milan in 1471 was a veritable carnival, although the season was Lent. The duke came magnificently attended, meaning to impress the Florentines, but Lorenzo outshone him. Sforza was amazed with the Medici collections, their statuary, their *objets d'art* and particularly their paintings, which he said were the finest and most numerous in Italy. The manuscripts and drawings also impressed him so much that he said, in comparison with what he had seen, gold and silver lost their value. As for the pageants, Florence had not yet seen the like. Three were given, representing the Annunciation, the Ascension, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost. Religious subjects were chosen no doubt on account of the fast, but that did not prevent the occurrence of a disaster during the progress of the third spectacle. The Church of San Spirito caught fire and was burnt to the ground. The people saw in this a judgment for the licence that accompanied the festival. It must have been something out of the common; for Machiavelli, who was never too strait-laced, professed himself deeply shocked by the conduct of the Milanese courtiers. It was the first time that flesh had been openly eaten in Florence during Lent.[1] But during the Carnival proper, however, the Florence of Lorenzo was every year given over, without reproach, to the wildest extravagance. Then the fantastic genius of the prince took wing and lent itself whole-heartedly to the amusement of the people. Lorenzo is said to have been the inventor of the allegorical cars which are now a commonplace of festival processions. But such occasions also inspired him to write carnival songs. These were arranged in solos, four part pieces, and full chorus. To their strains he used to lead through the street jigging bands of masqueraders, young men attired sometimes as Bacchanals, bearing the thyrsus, and wearing the fawn-skin and the vine-leaf crown.

Here Lorenzo's classical enthusiasm found an outlet in restoring for a brief moment the orgiastic worship of the Greek Dionysius. But this joyous return to classical antiquity had its variants. The spirit of decadence was present with the Florentines, even in the high noon of Humanism. Once at least was seen a pageant of another sort, which was akin to the *Danse Macabre*. A black vehicle

[1] Machiavelli, *Storia Fiorentina*, Book VII.

called the 'Car of Death' was decorated with the device of skull and cross-bones. At the top appeared a figure of Death with his scythe, around the vehicle was a number of covered tombs. From time to time the car halted, whereupon the graves opened (here we may see an idea borrowed directly from Dante), and out of them arose living skeletons, men all in black clothes, with the bones so cunningly painted in white that at night the illusion was perfect. Each spectre sat down on his tomb and sang a weird song of half burlesque moralising. This ended, they got into their graves again, covered themselves from sight, to reappear at the next stopping-place and repeat their song. The spectacle, so entirely characteristic of the age, when a frank naturalism went together with a curious relish for the morbid, has moved an American writer to some amusing comments. Not understanding how entirely such an exhibition was in accordance with the temper of Renaissance Florence, he is at pains to point out that the artist who devised the 'Car of Death,' Piero di Cosimo, was believed to be more or less insane. He adds that nowadays he would certainly be considered a 'crank.' His conclusion is so inimitable that it deserves quotation: 'However, on the same basis that some women are more happy when they are miserable, it may be assumed that the gay Florentines could look upon this wild prank as productive of merriment; laugh at what more sombre minds would consider a fearful reminder of the possibilities of an awful awakening in the world to come.' That is entirely to misconceive the situation. Contrast was of the very essence of the age, alike in the life of the people and of the individual. Lorenzo himself is one of the most complete types of the perpetual paradox. His extraordinary versatility reconciled the apparently irreconcilable. He could turn from his most licentious carnival 'Canti' to compose hymns of pure devotion, and in both he was equally sincere. He and his fellow-citizens understood to perfection the art of catching the moment as it flew, and the mood as it came. Each while it endured was lived intensely, and was the only thing worth living for. Paganism had returned, without making war on religious persuasion. The two dwelt together in a sort of millennial truce. Later a prophet arose who in the name of the law in the mind rebuked the law in the members and set them at war. He perished, not because of his rebuke or because Renaissance Florence, as such, rose

up against him, but because he had intermeddled in high politics. Lorenzo respected him. They may even have parted in the peace of God.[1] Had Lorenzo lived, Savonarola might have escaped the cord and the faggot. We have already seen with what tolerance Lorenzo could treat the uncompromising Friar. He even endured a breach of courtesy, which the reformer could have shown without betraying his cause. The forbearance of the Medici is all the finer when we reflect that to his mind, steeped as it was in Greek ideals, Savonarola's disregard of the sacred laws of hospitality must have been peculiarly jarring. But his magnanimity was at the same time due in great measure to his Hellenic culture, the last result of which is an Olympian calm.

Yet the mind of Lorenzo was turbulent enough when the mood of the vintage festival was upon him, and he indulged himself and his people in an outburst of pagan naturalism. In a more matter-of-fact age it is not easy to realise the riot of fantasy that the rediscovery of classical antiquity had awakened in the Florentine heart. If we search for a symbol, it is to be found perhaps not in Florence but in Rome. Visitors to the Vatican are no longer permitted to see the bath-room of Cardinal Bibbiena, but a note upon its unrestrained exuberance of decoration has been preserved. It is a new world of strange and hybrid creation. 'Cupids, with griffins like those of the Cambio, the three Graces, and next an ecclesiastical portrait; Leda with the swan, an elephant, and then the snake-haired Medusa, or figures of men and women, naked or draped, running, seated, embracing, intertwined with fruit and scroll and arabesque. It is a Bacchanal of the imagination, an unrestrained revel of the freest, wildest fancy that blends, within one image of decorative beauty, the sacred and profane stories—Eve's creation with the antique fauns and centaurs.'

There in microcosm is comprehended the psychology of Renaissance culture on its lighter side. In the Quattrocento the Muses came down to earth again and yielded to their freer mood. They laid aside their girdles and danced, they did not disdain a pretty affectation of harlotry, and they drew after them princes, priests, and philosophers, who could forget in their company the claims of wisdom. Yet, the revel ended, the votaries returned to the council

[1] Politian says the Friar blessed the dying Lorenzo: Pico della Mirandola differs. See page 202.

chamber, the consistory, and the study, to take up anew the work befitting men of action and of thought. They were citizens of three worlds—that of the recovered classical imagination, of the new-born modern imagination, with which the other was inseparably fused, often to grotesque issues, and the contemporary world of practice. They possessed the three with equal ease. Every phase of the new manifestation met in the character of Lorenzo.

Beneath all the froth of its recreation, the life of Florence was strenuous. She was a city of business-men and of eager politicians. War was never far from her gates, and her rulers, even amid junketings and feastings, light loves and elegant meetings for learned conversation or the contemplation of art, were playing a foremost part in the statecraft not only of Italy but of Europe. The enfranchised citizens, drawn from the members of the greater and lesser guilds, were engaged for the most part in commerce. They were a thrifty, industrious, keenly intelligent people, who in their home-life had attained a well-being that nearly approached luxury. Florence had a middle class of traders and art-workers that retained in times of greater prosperity much of the old simplicity praised by Dante and mourned by him as corrupt and dying. It is possible that in the bitterness of exile he took too severe a view of his native city. One hundred and twenty years after his death, when the Medici glory was at its height, Florence could still produce examples of the older virtue. The letters of Lapo Mazzei,[1] the notary, reflect a family life with which Dante's exquisite picture of the house-mother spinning amid her maidens would not be out of harmony. That excellent son of Mazzei's, who died when he was 'doing so well in Anagno's bank,' might have been one of the sons 'of Nerli and of Vecchio, well content with unrobed jerkin,' and his thrifty wife, who sewed the boy's trousers and got the cloth from Prato for economy's sake, 'one of their good dames, handling the spindle and the flax.' Yet the frivolities, the painted women, the extravagance which Dante censures even in the early fourteenth century,[2] had certainly not declined by the end of the fifteenth. Fickleness and instability marked the conduct of the people in public affairs; they were as ready to set up an idol as to tear it down, the life of

[1] Lapo Mazzei, *Letters*, i. 247, 248.

[2] Dante, *Paradiso*, canto xv. 93 *seq.*; also *Purgatorio*, xxiv.

the streets was disorderly. Brawls and assassinations were of too ordinary occurrence to excite much feeling. On how light a pretext men would fall to deadly combat has been shown by Benvenuto Cellini in the story of his Sunday walk with his young brother. Yet the law was not impotent in such cases, for the two riotous Cellini were banished for six months. With all their levity the Florentines were easily touched to seriousness, and the temper of individuals in that remarkable age was curiously susceptible to the prevailing influence of Humanism, which would act on young men in the same way as religion. Elsewhere we have noted the charming incident of the light-hearted young pleasure-seeker who told Niccolo Niccoli that he lived only *darmi buon tempo*, 'to give myself a good time,' and who was so moved by the aged scholar's rebuke that he forsook pleasure and followed learning. Truly, a fine ideal: but it is well to remember Burckhardt's remark that those who sigh to have lived in the days of the Renaissance, would, if their wish could be granted, probably not endure their surroundings for two hours.

Even the brilliant city of Lorenzo de' Medici, with all its glory of art, intellect, and spectacle, its graceful and gracious citizens, reinforced on festal days by picturesque throngs of country people, had its darker side. That pleasant and prosperous community could at a touch become a wild beast, ravening for blood, and below the ranks of the comfortable burgher class lay a wretched, unemployed and discontented rabble. The honest poor, Mazzei tells us, were few, but 'the bad who would not work were many.' Lorenzo was not making for the radical strength of the republic. In the year of the Pazzi conspiracy, when his enemies brought matters to a head against him and killed his brother, even the better sort of the common people had declined in means and in morals. Landucci, writing that winter, says: 'The people are greatly impoverished and there are none that want to work.' When Lorenzo died in 1492 he left the republic splendid, certainly, but insecure. Disaster was at hand for the Medici and for Florence. The prince's departure was entirely in character. Beside his deathbed stood Politian and Pico della Mirandola, with whom he talked as they might have done at a meeting of their academy. He told them that he wished he could have had a reprieve, in order to complete the library he was collecting for his friends. He was cheerful

GALEAZZO MARIA SFORZA, DUKE OF MILAN, PRAYING FOR VICTORY

Illumination on vellum by CRISTOFORO DE PREDIS, 1475

(*Wallace Collection*)

Photo Art Illustration Co.

and even quietly jocular to the end. To Savonarola he professed his Catholic faith and the resignation with which he submitted to the will of God.

Lorenzo was succeeded by his eldest son, Piero II., who was entirely unfit to carry on his father's work. He made an alliance with Ferdinand of Naples against Ludovico Sforza of Milan, who in 1492 called in the aid of Charles VIII. of France. Piero, a weak and treacherous creature, lost what little nerve he possessed and tried to buy off Charles by the cession of Pisa and Leghorn, thereby sacrificing the very existence of a state that depended upon her ports. The Florentines rose and drove out the Medici as traitors and rebels, and proscribed them from any further share in the government. The family glory was eclipsed till 1512, when Julius II. sent a Spanish army into Tuscany and, on the fall and sack of Prato, the Florentines in terror drove out the Gonfaloniers and recalled the Medici. Piero had been drowned in 1503. The new head of the family was Giuliano II., Lorenzo's second son.

From this point the history of the Medici in Florence is a record of waning power. But the house was to see a great revival of glory in the person of Lorenzo's third son, Giovanni, who as Leo X. was elected Pope in 1513. He accepted office entirely in the Epicurean spirit of his age and of his house. 'Let us,' he exclaimed heartily, 'let Us enjoy the Papacy, since God hath given it to Us.' Right well did he live up to that worldly aspiration. At the Vatican the old splendour of the Medici was restored; art, letters, and learning flourished at Rome, but Florence sank into a mere appanage of the Holy See. Leo requested his brother Giuliano to resign in favour of their nephew Lorenzo II., the son of Piero II. As compensation, Giuliano was created Duke of Nemours. Lorenzo II., a feeble character, died in 1519, worn out by licentious living. His only child was Catherine de' Medici, Queen of France. The next head of the house was Cardinal Giulio, a natural son of that Giuliano, the great Lorenzo's brother, who perished in the Pazzi conspiracy. In 1523 a Medici, Cardinal Giulio, once more filled Peter's chair. If one may use a familiar phrase, the family was fated 'to see the Renaissance out,' for it was during Giulio's reign as Clement VII. that the troops of the Emperor Charles V. entered Italy, sacked Rome in 1527, and made an end of the Renaissance

as far as Italy was concerned. Amid the ruin of the peninsula, Florence stands out for a brief moment in vindication of her ancient traditions. She rebelled against the miserable Clement and expelled the regents he had imposed upon her. Pope and Emperor then made peace together, and besieged the city, which resisted for ten months with a stubborn endurance worthy of her best days. After her surrender her history is no longer that of a republic, but of a hereditary duchy. The house of Medici, continued through the illegitimate Alexander, produced no further characters of note except the great free-lance captain, Giovanni delle Bande Nere, and his son Cosimo, called 'the Great,' first Grand-Duke of Tuscany, who was but a pale reflection of his illustrious ancestors, although he had some of their acumen, their taste in art and letters. In 1737 the male line became extinct.

CHAPTER XVII

A GREAT REACTIONARY: SAVONAROLA

In the closing years of Lorenzo the Magnificent, Florence was the scene of an extraordinary temporal and spiritual drama, the central figure in which was a man who stood not only for the spirit of the Renaissance but also for Mediævalism. We have already remarked a similar peculiarity in Dante, but here we must note a difference. Dante was the true child of the Middle Ages, and only reached forward to the modern world in so far as he was informed by the first stirrings of the spirit that was leading on a New Age. But Savonarola was what is called in modern scientific slang, a throw-back. Born in 1452, in the full tide of the Humanistic period, and born, too, in circumstances which tended to make him part of the most cultured world of his time, Savonarola rejected the spirit of his age, except in so far as it was something progressive in a political sense. For the rest he was a mediævalist. There was in him a strong strain of poetry, and he even wrote verses, not without passion. But for learning or literature pure and simple he took no concern. His genius found its true field in the spiritual world. He was concerned with men's souls, not with their intellects. To him, as to Dante and to Francis, the vision of the other world was ever present; but whereas with Francis the vision was that of a beatific kingdom, with which he would have reconciled this present world, and to Dante a beatific kingdom likewise, but one that was only to be attained by escape from this world, to Savonarola the vision of the unseen was a vision of judgment. In his early days everything seemed to make for his being a creature of his age, but he was radically antagonistic, and not even the seductions of a court, only less cultured than that of the Medici, won him from the brooding seriousness that was afterwards to turn him to a prophet. The anatomy of Savonarola's melancholy presents one of the most intricate problems amid all the complexities of that complex period, and it is one that, rightly

followed out and traced to its ultimate causes, would throw an extraordinary light, not only upon Fra Girolamo's own psychology, but upon the psychology of the later fifteenth century.

Girolamo Savonarola was the son of a physician, attached to the court of the Este at Ferrara. The family was noble, and the grandfather of Girolamo had removed to Ferrara some half century before the reformer's birth. It was intended that the boy should succeed his father as court physician, and he was brought up in that brilliant circle which Ercole d'Este gathered round him, and to which were attracted all the most eminent men of the time. The brightest ornament of the court of Ferrara was Ariosto himself, and before his time Boiardo, whom he followed, had also given Ferrara a name second to none in the making of Italian poetry. But for these things Savonarola cared naught. He did not spurn learning or artistic accomplishment, but he did not, like the men around him, exalt them to the position of gods. He could touch the lute with skill, but he inclined rather to melancholy than to joyous modes, and it was from the melancholy of his lute that his mother drew an impulse of divination which recalls a similar story of how the career of Francis was prophesied by his mother, Pica. The incident is best told by Villari in words that have the delicate harmony and low lighting of some old Italian interior. It was on the 23rd of April 1475. Lute in hand, he was playing a sad melody; his mother, as if moved by a spirit of divination, turned suddenly round to him, and exclaimed mournfully, 'My son, that is a sign we are soon to part.' He roused himself and continued, but with a trembling hand, to touch the strings of the lute, without raising his eyes from the ground.[1]

The spell of his vocation was upon him. Next morning he turned his back on Ferrara, and going to Bologna, there entered the house of the Dominican preachers. To his father he wrote justifying the step he had taken. He had embraced the religious life, he said, because of the great misery of the world, the iniquities of men. Then, with a minuteness of detail, which was afterwards to distinguish his sermons, he went on to particularise the iniquities that had so repelled him, and he runs the gamut of the seven deadly sins. 'Things have come to such a pass,' he exclaims, 'that no one can

[1] Villari, *Life of Savonarola*, Horner's translation, vol. i.

be found acting righteously. Many times a day have I repeated with tears the verse *Heu! fuge crudeles terras, fuge littus avarum.*' Everywhere he saw virtue despised and vice honoured, but as Symonds has pointed out, it is very curious, and also very characteristic of the atmosphere, half monkish, half pagan, in which Savonarola had been bred, that it is not to the fierce denunciations of the minor prophets, which he was afterwards to use with such astounding effect in the pulpit, nor is it to the milder, though still uncompromising counsels of the Gospel that he goes to find sanction for his withdrawal from the world, but to one poignant utterance of Virgil. In this year of his departure he was turned twenty-three. Already, when only in his twentieth year, his sense of the iniquity of mankind had driven him to poetry, and he composed an Italian poem, *The Ruin of the World.* His boyhood, so far as we know, had been austere. He had frequented churches often, he was much given to prayer. An aloofness from the world, reprehensible and almost priggish in so young a man, made him refuse even to accompany his father on his visits to the court. It may have been, however, that he knew himself only too well, and distrusted the influence of that bright and alluring atmosphere of pleasure which haunted the halls of Ercole d'Este. To study the physiognomy of Savonarola is to realise that the saint in him won out only through prayer and fasting. It is a face, for all its nobility, that betrays the potentialities of an overmastering earthliness. Place it beside the profile of Alexander VI., and although such a juxtaposition seems almost impious, it is not uninstructive, for in both faces there are general lines of similarity. In the one, however, the brute is purged out; in the other, we have the brute triumphant. At the risk of irrelevancy, we may take a flying leap into the middle of the nineteenth century to look for a moment at another head—that of its greatest woman writer, whose likeness to Savonarola, of whom she wrote with unmatched skill, is so close as to be startling. But hers is the face of compromise, and with that, instructive comparison ends.

Sealed to austerity, he bade good-bye to Ferrara and those he had known there, or whom he had refused to know, 'those young men,' as Symonds says, 'in tight hose and parti-coloured jackets, with oaths upon their lips, and deeds of violence and lust within their hearts.' The time was not far distant, when in Florence he was to

find his bitterest enemies in such-like young men of the period, those elegant, accomplished, sneering Florentines, of the most fascinating and godless wit, who made the Friar and his followers the chosen butt of their idle hours. But Fra Girolamo had still some way to go. No prophet bursts upon the world without a period of preparation. He remained with the Dominican preachers for seven years, which only confirmed him in his regretful attitude towards humanity. In the very year of his entrance into the Dominican cloister, he had written another poem, this time it was *The Ruin of the Church*. There, too, he censured an ever-present corruption which he was not slow to attribute to the worldliness of the papacy. At Ferrara he had seen Aeneas Silvius enter with the pomp of an earthly conqueror. Thereafter he had watched the licentious reign of Sixtus IV. He does not hesitate to call Rome the head and front of the offenders. His language towards her recalls the Book of Revelation. He prays that he may break her wings. In such meditations his seven years passed away, and then he was sent out into the world as a preacher, first to Ferrara, then to Florence, but not yet had he found himself. His delivery was unimpressive, his manner that of an outworn time, for in the convent he had been bred to the subtlety of scholastic disputation. His style was scholastic, and that in itself was at this time old-fashioned. One day he was to put the schoolman within him in its right place, and to use the method with extraordinary effect. But as yet his style was arid, his voice weak, his message perceived perhaps clearly enough, but not yet brought to full expression.

At Florence he took up his abode in the cloister of San Marco, where the Medicean library had already been established, and where the walls had but lately been covered by Fra Angelico's visions of things unseen. From the cloister he looked forth upon a Florence that seemed to him to sum up all that vanity of life with which he found himself in such keen antagonism. He had come to Florence in the noontide of her glory. Lorenzo and his magnificence were all-pervading. Her great and cultivated men alternated sublime speculations in pagan philosophy with pagan recreations that recalled rather a decadent Roman Empire than the pure atmosphere of the Athenian Academe. When Florence put on her holiday mask she did so with no half heart. Her prince and his fellow-philosophers

sported in the streets with the freedom of undergraduates. Lorenzo himself could turn from the composition of a holy canticle to the most ribald verse-making. It was all done, it is true, *de bon cœur*, and this side of Florentine vanity is a thing that the broad-minded can hardly condemn as 'worthy of hell-fire'; but below it all, below the elegant gaiety and sparkling froth of that marvellous comedy of manners, there lay a deep-seated corruption at which Savonarola did well to strike, for the period had, as well as its amiable frivolities, its orgies of blood, of lust.

In his retreat at San Marco, Savonarola continued the study of St. Thomas on which he had been reared from boyhood, but to that he added a profound acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures. His faith by the very narrowness of its concentration burned white-hot. He looked forth upon the philosophers without envy. Those whom they worshipped, the ancient pagan thinkers, Savonarola knew very well to be eternally damned. An old woman, he would say, knew more of saving faith than Plato. And so the prophet in him grew. It was at San Gimigniano, whither he had been sent from Florence, that he first truly discovered his pulpit gifts. By this time his scriptural studies had entirely superseded those of the schoolman. He had turned his thoughts not only to the word, but to the interpretation of the Bible, which he had learned by heart. For every text he knew four interpretations, and for some he knew hundreds. His view of the Scriptures was mystical, he looked for hidden things in the law. His vision became apocalyptic. The first flash of prophecy, that the Church should be scourged, then restored, was followed by a fiercer outburst at Brescia. He had found not only his method but his voice, for as the vision grew clearer within him, so did he find a fitting and tumultuous eloquence wherewith to flash it upon the hearts of his hearers. It was fierce, uncompromising, even uncouth preaching, but its power was a thing the like of which Italy had never seen. Brescia trembled as he denounced the sins of Italy, and pictured their city flowing with blood. Twenty-six years afterwards, when Gaston de Foix entered the town, the citizens recalled the sermon and believed that the Dominican monk had indeed foreseen their calamity. He returned to Florence, where the effect of his new-found gifts was electrical.

He became the sensation of the hour. The city flocked to hear

him. At length the Church of San Marco was too small to hold the expectant crowds. He removed to the cathedral, which he packed to the doors. To the spectator, who knew not the preacher, it might have seemed that the throng had come out in vain, for the monk often entered so worn with meditation and sleepless anxiety that he could hardly ascend the pulpit stairs, and at first the sermon was purely dialectic. The preacher showed no great gifts, either of voice or of imagery, but he was now master of his method. Gradually, as he warmed to his theme, illustration succeeded illustration with ever increasing power and vividness. Then at last he reached a pitch when the torrent of his thought could no longer be controlled, he had mastered his audience, it was at one with him, he could do with it whatsoever he pleased, and what he pleased was to convict it of sin, to enforce the terrors of the law, and prepare the way for the persuasiveness of the Gospel. He believed in very truth that he was the mouthpiece of God. Pico della Mirandola, that exquisite philosopher, who sought to reconcile all knowledge, and who plunged into the mystic speculations of the Cabbala as eagerly as he followed Ficino in his expositions of Plato, was Savonarola's friend and attentive hearer. The Friar's voice, he tells us, startling the stillness of the Duomo, thronged through all its space with people, was like a clap of doom. A cold shiver ran through the marrow of his bones, the hairs of his head stood on end as he listened. Sobbing, terror, and tears possessed the listeners, who passed into the streets more dead than alive. Nor did the preacher cease to announce the coming of instant doom as punishment for the sins of the people. Before he had removed to the Duomo, he had delivered in the Church of St. Mark a course of sermons on the Revelations. He has himself told us the scheme of those discourses, which were based on three main propositions—that the Church would be renewed in his own time, that before that renovation God would strike all Italy with a fearful chastisement, and lastly, that these things would happen shortly. It was the development of the thought upon these lines that gives his ministry so startling a touch of the prophetic, for in no long time the course of events seemed in certain particulars to have justified his predictions; and here we see the working of that law, enunciated to the amazement and even the scandal of a pious Scotland five and thirty years ago

by William Robertson Smith, that a prophet never speaks save with reference to his own times. Within three years after the beginning of Savonarola's public ministry, Charles VIII. had entered Italy, Lorenzo was dead, and politicians as well as mystics thought that a new chapter had opened in the world's history. The reform of the Church was also destined to follow. The vile pontificate of Sixtus passed away, only to be followed by the even viler rule of Innocent VIII., on whose tomb men were to inscribe, possibly with blasphemous irony, the verse, 'Behold, I have washed mine hands in innocency.' It was with Innocent before his eyes that Savonarola had the vision of the sword, and heard a voice saying, 'Ecce, gladius Domini super terram cito et velociter.' He dreamed, too, of Rome, in which he saw a black cross rising to Heaven, and inscribed 'The Cross of the wrath of God.' He saw terrible visions of pestilence and of war. Like another Jonah, he cried, 'O Rome, repent—repent, Venice—Milan repent! For five years have I told you this thing, and now again I cry unto you. The Lord is full of wrath, the angels on their knees cry to Him "Strike, strike!" All the Church triumphant hath cried to Christ, "Thou didst die in vain—Italy is in confusion," saith the Lord, "this time she shall be the prey of the barbarians, who are but the instruments of the saints."' He has a vision of the saints in battle sweeping through Italy, each city sought by its own patron, St. Peter for Rome, St. Paul and St. Gregory, St. John for Florence, St. Anthony for Lombardy. St. Mark cries 'Haste thee to the city that is throned upon waters,' and behind this consistory of Heaven marching to war, walks pestilence.

Such was the man and the preacher that had attracted the curiosity and aroused the awe of the Florentines. Had Savonarola been content to remain simply the preacher, he might have effected quietly a large measure of that reformation which he sought, for undeniably he had captured the imagination of the most imaginative city in Italy, and he could have done with it what he pleased. But thus he would have escaped martyrdom. He might have escaped, too, the extraordinary fame that is his. On such a character it is impossible to sit in judgment, but as great figures recede through the perspective of the centuries, it is possible to see at what points they may have erred, although it may not be possible to say how they could have taken a wiser course. It would seem that the two

cardinal errors, if errors they were, of Savonarola's career, were first, his attempt to legislate for morals, and second, his allowing himself to be drawn into political life, for the preacher became at length the virtual ruler of Florence. His denunciations of corruption in high places had the inevitable result of arousing distrust and suspicion, though strangely enough not dislike, on the part of those he attacked. Lorenzo, who had felt the lash of Savonarola's tongue, made no change in his regard. With that perpetual instinct of his for the glorification of Florence, he had been instrumental in bringing Savonarola there, after the establishment of his fame as a preacher. Florence, that possessed the best Platonist in Ficino, the most cultivated gentleman in Pico della Mirandola, the most admirable poet in Politian, must not lack, to add to her glory, the greatest preacher of the age. And so Lorenzo drew Savonarola into his net—all for the glory of Florence. Smiling amid attack, he would visit the Convent of San Lorenzo, and would drop gold into the alms-box. The Friar treated him with indifference, and made haste to hand his ducats to the poor. Lorenzo, with a shrug, exclaimed, 'My guest will not receive me in my own house.' He forgot, says Symonds, that the Convent of San Marco, though built and beautified by the Medicean munificence, was not Lorenzo's house, but God's. Lorenzo continued tolerant, more than tolerant, to the day of his death. When that day came, laying aside his paganism, with his inevitable lightness, he turned with equal sincerity to the concerns of his soul, and it was entirely characteristic that he should send for Fra Girolamo. The Friar came and stood at the foot of the bed. 'Three things are required of you,' he said to the dying prince, 'to have a full and lively faith in God's mercy, to restore what you have unjustly gained, to give back liberty to Florence.' The first two things Lorenzo promised gladly, but the latter was too hard for him. He turned his face to the wall, the Friar departed, leaving the prince unshriven, and so Lorenzo died.[1]

In that third requisition of his to the dying Medici, we find the expression of another side of Savonarola's life and character, which had been developed side by side with the development of his power as a preacher. In order rightly to trace and understand this development, it will be necessary to go back a little way, and to consider in

[1] So Pico, accepted by Symonds, but rejected by Roscoe, chap. x., note 4.

outline the political constitution and the state of parties in Florence at this period. Only thus can we ascertain the true relations of the preacher to the politician, only thus can we understand the martyrdom of Savonarola.

Circumstances played into Savonarola's hand; the chief of these was the invasion of Italy by Charles VIII., which seemed an actual fulfilment of the Friar's prophecies. When Charles entered Florence, Savonarola, together with Pietro Capponi, was delegated to treat with the king, who humbled himself before the man who came to him as the instrument of the Divine Law. Piero de' Medici, Lorenzo's son, the titular head of Florence, had, in abject terror, yielded everything to Charles, but Savonarola retrieved the situation, and was able to come to terms with the invader. After the agreement had been signed, Charles was in no hurry to withdraw his army, but the Friar again appeared before him, and with further threats of the Divine wrath, warned him to retire. Thereupon Florence turned to Savonarola as to a protector, and he found himself forced to assume the rôle of political reformer. The old form of the constitution was no longer adequate; it was to remodel this and to bring it into accord with new requirements that Savonarola set himself in the end of the year 1494. Elsewhere we have spoken of the earlier municipal administration of Florence, and it is unnecessary to recapitulate these conditions here.

At a general parliament assembled on the 2nd of December, twenty *accoppiatori* were elected to nominate magistrates, and arrange the proposed reforms, which maintained many of the old institutions under a modified form. The old arrangement of a gonfalonier with eight priors forming a signory—officials who held office for only two months at a time—was preserved. The magistracy of the Eight, a committee of law and order, was also retained, as well as the old magistracy of the Ten, whose care was war. There also remained the gonfaloniers of the companies, and several other ancient institutions. The main questions that arose were not so much those of municipal administration as of republican government. After their rise to power, the Medici had instituted the Council of Seventy, which was merely an instrument of despotism, for it was recruited only from partisans of the great house. One of the first acts of Savonarola's new government was to abolish the

Seventy, and here we note a distinct reaction against tyranny, a blow struck by the greatest reactionary of the period. Savonarola, we have already said, was a throw-back to mediævalism. Such philosophy as he had was that of the schoolmen, his divinity was of the orthodox type of Dante, his culture was of the age preceding Petrarch, and now when he had placed his hand to the political machine, his first effort was to restore what he can of the liberties of the old commune. It must not be imagined, however, for a moment, that he was inspired by any half poetical and romantic love of liberty, such as that which inspired Olgiati, Visconti, and Lampugnani to the assassination of the tyrant Sforza. Rather are we to look for the causes of Savonarola's attempt to return to communal liberties in his intense conservatism. For him that which had been of old was good, his vision of ecclesiastical reform was not revolutionary; his phrase is always 'A renewed Church,' by which he meant a Church restored to its pristine purity. Here it may be convenient to notice the popular error which, in the minds of many excellent people, confuses Savonarola with the reformers of the Church. He was no more a reformer than Dante. Doctrinal change would have seemed to him the deadliest sin; all that he aimed at was the clearing away of abuses. For him the Catholic Church in its essence was the holiest of all things on earth. And so in like manner, the Friar, clinging to earlier institutions, to the simplicity of those days celebrated by Dante in his picture of an early, virtuous, and simple Florence, the days of the distaff and of plain living, when worthy burghers such as Bellincion Berti were content with a plain leather girdle clasped with bone—to these ideals, then, the Friar returned, when he found himself called to be not only the spiritual but the political leader of the Florentines. When he swept away the Council of the Seventy, he would have restored those of the people and of the commune, but this was impossible, because the changing times had obliterated that old division of the citizens into Popolo and Commune—the former, being burghers of a certain income, possessing the right to vote for the officers of the signory, the latter the mass of the people who were consulted only on the larger issues of government. The old representative councils of these classes being now impracticable, it was proposed to follow the example of Venice, and to institute a great council of all citizens and a

smaller body of Ottimati or Optimates. The question was variously debated, and it was pointed out that while in Venice such a scheme answered because it possessed an aristocracy from which this council of Ottimati could be recruited, in Florence, citizens of all ranks would have to be admitted, and there were those who therefore feared that such a government would be too democratic.

The question was at length solved by Savonarola, who threw the weight of his preaching upon the side of a universal government, with a great council modelled on that of Venice, but modified to suit the peculiar requirements of Florence. The Friar had not personally entered the arena of state deliberations, and the actual proposal of a great council stood in the name of Paolo Angelo Soderini, but it was only Fra Giralomo's preaching that carried the Soderini measure to victory. 'From that moment,' says Villari, 'the Friar obtained so great an ascendancy over the people that the discussions in the palace and the laws passed seemed to be mere copies of his sermons.' It was significant of the New Age that Savonarola's influence was extended by the press, which was now in active operation and disseminated the Friar's discourses among the people in the form of pamphlets. The Consiglio Maggiore was accordingly established, with various modifications and adjustments to Florentine needs. Into the minutiæ of this scheme it is unnecessary to enter, but broadly the council contained all citizens above twenty-nine years of age, who were *beneficiati* or possessed, according to the old laws of Florence, of the right to govern. Every three years sixty young men were added to the council in order to give them an interest in political affairs, and to encourage them to live virtuously.

The council's principal duty was to elect magistrates, and a council of eighty, a senate of men over forty years of age, renewable every six months. Questions that were unsuitable for the great council were discussed in private by the Eighty, sitting in conjunction with the signory, or college of the eight priors. The new regime was successful; from the outset it worked smoothly, and Savonarola continued to support it from the pulpit, whence at the same time he never ceased to advocate new measures, which were given constitutional sanction. In his sermons he attacked luxury and corruption, he defended freedom, he exposed tyranny, and while,

as we have said, he left the dogma of the Church unassailed, his denunciations of ecclesiastical scandals, and particularly those of the papacy, rose higher and ever higher. Rome could not long remain indifferent to her fiercest critic. It was not palatable to Alexander to hear what the Friar, far away in Florence, was saying about the on-goings of the Vatican. When Savonarola was dealing plainly with iniquity, he dealt very plainly indeed, and never scrupled to descend to particulars, but Pope Alexander had sufficient genius himself to know the dangers of meddling with a man of genius. At first he avoided opposition, he invited Savonarola to Rome, but the delicate flattery of the Pope's letter was without effect—the Friar would not go. Then Alexander went so far as to interdict him from preaching, but an official remonstrance from the Florentine Council of Ten caused the interdict to be set aside. The priors feared that if the interdict were enforced, it would lead to riot, and for the sake of peace Alexander withdrew the ban. Again he tried flattery and even offered the Friar a cardinal's hat, but such pomps and vanities had no attractions for Savonarola. He could not be silenced. His response to the offer of the highest papal favour was a fiercer criticism of Alexander's private life.

In Florence, Savonarola's influence now stood higher than ever. Not only had he captured the people by his preaching, but he had shown them a satisfactory way of dealing with the most knotty problems of government. It was inevitable that he should be looked to as the head of the state. This attitude was fraught with danger for the enthusiast, for, although he saw it not, he and Florence were not at one. He regarded his political influence chiefly as a means of quickening spiritual life. The first care of the Florentines, on the other hand, was merely for a better political condition. At heart they cared nothing for Savonarola's religious reform; they merely accepted it as a means towards better government. But Fra Girolamo was blind to this crucial issue, and his zeal led him into an act of folly. He began to use his political power for religious ends—in a word, he made the cardinal mistake of attempting to legislate for morals.

It was impossible that Savonarola and his earnest followers could seem anything but ridiculous to the young gallants of Renaissance Florence. These with their light songs, their irre-

pressible gaiety, their hands as skilful with the lute as with the dagger, their gorgeous feasts, modelled on banquets of decadent Rome, their trains of loose companions, found in the prophet the finest possible butt. Accordingly they formed a society, entitled the Compagnacci, or Scamps, the object of which was to ridicule the Friar and his followers, whom they styled the Piagnoni, or Snivellers. The better to give point to their purpose, they tried in 1497 to revive the old Medicean carnival with its pagan orgies. Savonarola replied with one of the most famous acts of his career—the Burning of the Vanities. He urged upon his hearers a complete renunciation of all worldly gauds and toys, he sent bands of little children through the streets to visit the houses and to collect licentious books and pictures, and articles of personal adornment which might be considered immodest and unbecoming. On the 7th of February, the last day of the carnival, a solemn procession of penitents wended its way to the Piazza of the Signoria, and there offered up, on a huge wooden pyramid, the great harvest of the accursed thing. While this pious act of faith went forward, and as the vanities went up in flames (Heaven knows what precious manuscripts of Sappho, and other lost or partially lost pagan poets may not have perished there!), the Compagnacci watched with an anger that was deeper than mere contempt of asceticism. The Compagnacci had the support of a party called the Arabiati, who desired to see the government restricted to the Ottimati, and the Bigi or Greys, so-called because of their apparently neutral policy, under which they concealed a sincere desire for the restoration of the Medici. The Compagnacci did not actually form a political party. The Ottimati were but a small body; the Bigi, although they could command powerful support inside and outside Florence, had small chance of success, for the object of their hopes, Piero de' Medici, was too despicable a creature to command a serious following.

The *auto-da-fé* had the sanction of the government, and behind it there lurked a threat of police, if not of political, compulsion. The Compagnacci seized the point with characteristic alertness: the government, in thus favouring monkish exhibitions, was compromising its own dignity. But the displeasure of Savonarola's enemies, although it became a public question, as was inevitable in Florence, splitting the community into still finer sub-divisions of faction, did

not lead to any serious disturbance. Neither Savonarola nor the republic was imperilled thereby. It led, however, to a ludicrous fiasco. One of the minor offshoots of the disaffected tried to restore the exiled Piero de' Medici. He expected that Florence would give him an ovation—instead she merely shut the city gates in his face. At another time such an attempt might have ended in bloodshed, and a second effort of the same kind ended in the execution of the venerable Bernardo del Nero and his companions. But although Florence was outwardly calm, the differences and smouldering factional fires bespoke a state of things which might very easily give Pope Alexander the opportunity for interference.

The great collision between Savonarola and the Pope was now at hand; the Friar's preaching became more and more denunciatory, and Alexander had given him sufficient cause. Italy was buzzing with rumour; the mysterious assassination of the Duke of Gandia had not left Alexander clear of complicity in his son's murder. The presence of Lucrezia Borgia in the Vatican was the most fertile source of scandalous rumour, which men were only too ready to believe. Savonarola was ordered to be silent; he paid no attention to the order, and at last Alexander was forced to the extreme course of excommunicating his fiercest critic. Savonarola ignored the excommunication, declaring that the Pope, who had been elected simoniacally, was no true head of the Church, and therefore had no authority. In this move Savonarola betrays the weakness of his position. Sincerely devoted to the Church, he had now brought himself into a position of antagonism, which logically called for complete separation, such as Luther's, but that separation was for Savonarola impossible. Accordingly, in a manner that suggests his scholastic training, he began to juggle with nice distinctions. He drew a line between the papal office and the Pope as a man. It was the beginning of the end.

His denunciations grew fiercer and ever fiercer, and Alexander called upon the authorities of Florence to suppress the pestilent Friar. That could not be done so long as a signory was in office that favoured Savonarola, but the magistracy, as we remember, was changeable every six months, and at last an opportunity presented itself of crushing the reformer. In the meantime, Savonarola, taking upon himself an almost papal function, had tried to convene a

THE EXECUTION OF SAVONAROLA (PAINTER UNKNOWN)

At Florence

Photo Alinari

General Council for the salvation of the Church. In this for a time it seemed he was likely to have the support of Charles VIII., whose thoughts had taken a pious turn—a thing not unusual with Renaissance princes—but unfortunately for the Friar's cause, Charles died. The council came to naught, and Savonarola was left exposed to the disfavour of a hostile signory. Then occurred a regrettable, and as it proved in the end, fatal incident, that had its roots in superstition, and which reacted to Savonarola's destruction.

A Franciscan monk, Francesco da Puglia, in the course of a fiercely denunciatory sermon, challenged Savonarola to the ordeal of fire, so that the falsity of the Friar's doctrines might be exposed. Savonarola, mediævalist though he was, had too much enlightenment to regard any such proposal with favour. He considered it unseemly, and declined the trial. But one of his followers, Brother Domenico Buonvicini, of Pescia, a narrow-minded enthusiast, took up the challenge, so that in his own person he might vindicate his master. Francesco da Puglia replied that he would endure the ordeal with none but Savonarola, but he nominated another Friar, Giuliano Rondinelli, to go through the fire with Fra Domenico. Savonarola did everything in his power to prevent this monumental folly, but unfortunately the matter had gone too far, even for his influence. It was too choice an opportunity for the Compagnacci and the factions allied with them to let slip. They looked confidently forward to the complete discomfiture of their enemies. It is not to be supposed for a moment that those ungodly young men believed in any Divine interposition, but they knew that hot ploughshares are hot ploughshares, and that the Friar would certainly be burned. As for their champion, Rondinelli, it was not beyond the bounds of possibility that he might be saved from injury without a miracle, for there were ways and means of arranging even a trial by ordeal.

We have no direct evidence, but the lamentable fiasco into which the whole affair degenerated has in it many particulars that point to manipulation. The trial, arranged for the 7th of April 1498, afforded a tremendous public sensation, and a spectacle after the hearts of the Florentines. Processions of monks came to the great square of Florence, chanting Litanies. The signory were present in all the dignity of their office, and the piazza was thronged to its remotest corner by the multitude. To give the last touch of sensa-

tion to the affair, Savonarola, believing that the zeal of his follower Domenico was a sign from Heaven, had now actually consented to share the test. The fire was lighted, ploughshares were heated and laid in order, but still the people waited in vain. It appeared that the other side, now that they were faced with the actual crux of the affair, were in no hurry to proceed. Lengthy discussions upon minor points of relevancy consumed the whole day, and it was observed that nobody seemed very ready to keep up the fire. Finally a violent thunder-shower settled the whole business. The officials rose in haste, and declared that the ordeal could not take place that day. The upshot, of course, was what might have been expected from excitable Florence. The people, baulked of their spectacle, as usual fastened upon the person whom one would have expected them to favour. Exactly the same thing happened during the conspiracy of the Pazzi, where the populace, seeing their tyrant assailed, sided not with the conspirators but with the Medici.

In this instance again, the popular discontent fastened not upon those who had put off the ceremony but on Savonarola. The furious crowds alleged that had he been really steadfast and assured of his Divine mission, he would have proceeded at once to the trial, without wasting the day in discussion. The Compagnacci, and with them the Bigi and Arabiati, improved the occasion and stirred up the populace against the Piagnoni. Rioting ensued, Savonarola's followers were insulted in the streets, and some were even killed. Then the mob in force stormed the Convent of St. Mark. The monks resisted gallantly, but they were at last overpowered, and Savonarola, together with Fra Domenico and Fra Silvestro Maruffi, were taken and thrown into prison. The Pope wished that Savonarola should be handed over to his tender mercies, but the signory declared that that would be below the dignity of Florence. But, if they did not give up their prisoner, the hostile signory were not above taking instructions from Rome as to the methods of examination. There was but one obvious means—the rack. Physically, Savonarola was entirely incapable of enduring torture. His sensibilities, strained to breaking pitch by years of mental struggle, made him a bad subject for the question. His agonised admissions, whatever they may have been, were carefully edited so as to prejudice his case to the utmost. Fra Silvestro, a weak visionary, was ready

to make any admission, but Fra Domenico could not be moved to utter a word in betrayal of either his master or his master's principles. Some semblance of justice still remained to the ungrateful Florentines. In spite of cunningly altered confessions, they could find no reasonable ground of condemnation. Their delay exasperated Alexander, who sent a succession of furious letters, demanding the persons of the accused, with whom he would know how to deal.

Meanwhile two months had passed, and the term of the signory had almost expired. They contrived, however, that the elections for the next two months should bring in a magistracy of their way of thinking—that is to say, favourable to the Arabiati. The Pope found the new signory more conciliatory; they did not, it is true, hand over the persons of the accused, but they consented to receive two Apostolic commissioners, who were to bring the trial to a conclusion. Of Savonarola's life in prison we have few details, but even torture and its resulting illness did not arrest his pen. From prison he issued several religious pamphlets, notably his *Meditations on the 31st and 51st Psalms*, the latter of which was afterwards published by Luther, who wrote a preface for it. The Apostolic commissioners made short work. Their sittings began on the 19th of May 1498, and from the first they had determined the issue of the trial. Their instructions were that if Savonarola were indeed another John the Baptist, yet should he be put to death. Once more they applied torture, and this time Savonarola could not be shaken. It is one of the most extraordinary and convincing proofs of his spiritual resolution that, after his frame had been once shattered by the rack, he should have been able amid a second agony to remain unmoved. It is not improbable that he regarded his second torment as an expiation of the denials which the weakness of the flesh had on the first occasion wrung from him. Speaking of the first examination, Symonds says that he had the will but not the nerve of a martyr. In the interval, however, between his first and second examination, he had rallied a resolve that carried him triumphantly through the last act of his tragedy. That was played out four days after the beginning of his trial before the Pope's commissioners. Without argument he had been condemned, together with Fra Domenico and Fra Silvestro. The miserable recantations of Fra Silvestro availed him nothing. 'One

Friar more or less,' said the commissioners, 'does not matter. It would make a better show to hang three than two, and in these matters the populace is always worthy of some consideration.'

It may seem incredible that the people of Florence, who had idolised Savonarola for so many years, who had been moved by his preaching at least to a momentary denial of pomps and vanities, who had seen in him the regenerator of the state, the deviser of a method of government which Guicciardini and Machiavelli declared they could not better, could have stood by to watch the martyrdom of Savonarola without lifting so much as a finger in his defence. But that betrayal is only another symptom of the essential fickleness of popular feeling. At heart the Florentines cared nothing for the real message of Savonarola. They were the most perfect sensationalists of a time when the senses were worshipped beyond all other gods. The preaching of Savonarola thrilled them with an æsthetic luxury. To repent of one's sins was a new and subtle form of pleasure. Beyond that they did not go. Allowing, too, for isolated instances of sincerity, the method of the moral reformation was not calculated to make for permanence. The burning of the vanities was a tremendous mistake, the summoning of children to scour the streets in search of the unclean thing was a piece of misdirected enthusiasm that brought its own reaction, its own penalty. Puritanism in Florence was an exotic. In that city of quick enthusiasms such a movement might gather strength for an instant, but it could not last. Reaction was certain and deadly, and so Savonarola found it.

The last act of blood and fire was celebrated with extraordinary pomp. We can see it still in its minutest details, reproduced in a curious picture in the Pinacoteca of Perugia. In front of the palazzo is a great staging for the papal commissioners and the magistracy, and from the left angle of the palazzo, a wooden bridge of scaffolding leads to the centre of the square. At the end of this wooden bridge was erected a gibbet, shaped like the letter T, a shape which gave offence to some, who declared it too nearly resembled the Cross. The dismal proceedings were delayed therefore until one arm was sawn off. Below the stake was a pile of faggots. With Savonarola came forth his faithful Dómenico and the miserable Silvestro, but the latter, like his master, had bitterly repented his recantations

and denials, and had now caught the confidence of his great leader. The three went to their death joyfully, but without unbecoming exultation. The two Friars were hanged first. When it came to Savonarola's turn, he was first solemnly degraded from his ecclesiastical rank. The Bishop of Vasona unfrocked him, and in the language of those dismal ceremonies 'relaxed the prisoner to the secular arm.' It was by this fiction that the Church kept her hands clean from blood. But the Friar was not to go without leaving on record one brilliant retort to his persecutors. As the Bishop pronounced the words, 'I separate thee from the Church militant and triumphant,' the condemned replied, 'Militant, yes; triumphant, no. That is not yours.' Then adding, 'The Lord has suffered as much for me,' he submitted to the hangman. As soon as life was extinct, the great pile of faggots beneath the gallows was lighted, and the three martyrs' bodies, which had now been supported by chains, were slowly consumed. Thereafter their ashes were flung into the Arno. Long afterwards an old Florentine used to relate that he, watching the spectacle with a child's curiosity, saw among the embers the heart of Savonarola still unconsumed. Another legend tells how some imagine that before the fire was lighted they saw the right hand of the martyr give the sign of benediction. The martyrdom produced its inevitable reaction. Immediately the mythopœic faculty began to weave around Savonarola's memory the legends of a saint. So illogical was the Church that had condemned him that she all but granted him formal canonisation. Short of that, many Dominican churches used a special office with his name and in his honour. The fickle Florentines gave him in his death a fidelity that they denied him in his life. Most of all they honoured him as the champion of political liberty, but they did not forget that he had seemed a prophet, and in the evil days to come they fancied that they saw his visions fulfilled. His mission, as he conceived it, perished with him. He misunderstood his own times: he was to a great extent an anachronism. As a champion of liberty, however, he may be allowed a true insight into contemporary tendencies. It is difficult altogether to agree with Symonds when he talks of Savonarola's insight into the coming of a New Age for the Church and for Italy as a main fact of the psychology of the Renaissance. What Savonarola foresaw was something that could

have had no connection with the tendencies of his own time. We have seen how Petrarch had something of a prophetic vision of the intellectual future of Europe, and that vision is incontestably a main fact of the psychology of the Renaissance. But Savonarola stands as it were outside the period. Everything in thought and in doctrine, in manners and in morals, or the lack of them, that was going to build up the modern world and the modern spirit was to Savonarola the accursed thing. His vision of a better time remains vague and unformulated. Had he formulated his view, it would have been found widely diverse from subsequent events; but while with due care we separate Savonarola from his own times, and discount his visions as prophecy, his influence upon succeeding generations is at once profound and far-reaching. Even where he was misunderstood he was an inspiration, and some, like Luther, who mistook him for a reformer in the German sense, have helped to direct his influence—a thing in itself hostile to Renaissance—into channels that made for the perfecting of the Renaissance spirit and the upbuilding of the modern world.

CHAPTER XVIII

MACHIAVELLI

AFTER Savonarola, the history of Florence centres in one who was no less a patriot, though there was in him nothing of the saint. The martyred Friar, as we have remarked, was the child of an earlier age, and had little in common with the essential spirit of the Renaissance. But Niccolo di Bernardo dei Machiavelli reflects the temper of his times almost in its entirety, with the single exception that he was not greatly accomplished in humane learning. By this it must not be understood that he lacked knowledge of, or enthusiasm for, the great examples of antiquity. He was, indeed, deeply versed in classical history, but scholarship, in the particular sense, was not his. A competent Latinist, though with few graces of Latin style, Machiavelli had little or no Greek, but what he missed in acquaintance with the original texts, he amply made up in his study of translations, and this knowledge he turned to the most brilliant account in his writings. Yet in this very respect he is typical of his age. He came into prominence at the end of the last great period of pure scholarship, when mere accomplishment in the literature of Greece and Rome was giving place to a revived interest in the Italian language. His attitude to humane learning is entirely characteristic. First and foremost he was a man of affairs, who had no time for the serious scholarship or the delicate literary trifling of a Poggio or a Politian; but he knew the value of those studies and took such advantage of them as he could. In him we mark a great compromise between the practical and the speculative life, just such a compromise as was outlined by the Florentine Academicians in their Camaldolese Disputation. The perfectly equipped man, it was held, should be he who combined both ways of life. Never were they more deftly fused than in 'cunning Machiavel.'

That last phrase contains a note of warning. The debasement of the word 'cunning' gives the epithet an apparent fitness to the

estimate of Machiavelli that prevailed from his own day until Professor Villari set the great statesman's character in a juster light. The name with its derivative adjective still signifies to the popular mind all that is tortuous and unscrupulous in policy, all that is dark and underhand in personal dealing. And Machiavelli, it must be admitted, even by his defenders, was less than any man troubled with what Ibsen has named 'the sickly conscience.' But before he can be judged, it is necessary to ascertain accurately his controversial position. It must be remembered, too, that he was among the desperately clever of this world, one of those whose lofty generalisations of thought expressed themselves in paradox not to be comprehended by the vulgar. To such men sin is always imputed by the plodding moralist whose horizon is too narrow to let him discern how the apparently malignant thought stretches out until it touches essential truth. Machiavelli's system was not perfect, being but human. Villari has shown exactly wherein it failed, but though faulty in detail, it had its roots in the purest patriotism. It is by his purpose rather than by his statements that Machiavelli is to be judged. His was, at bottom, no sordid teaching that evil might be done in order that good might come. No one who reads intelligently the sublime close of *The Prince*, the very book upon which is founded the gravest misconception of Machiavelli's character, but must admit that his aim was to lead good out of evil for the highest welfare of the state. He recognised equally the existence of good and evil in the world; he viewed them dispassionately; he never confused them. But he saw with unerring insight that men were not good, and that the prince must work with the material that lay to his hand. Yet when he permits a breach of faith, where to keep faith would be against the ruler's interest, he is arguing not for the ruler's private welfare, but for that of the state. Implicitly he demands of a virtuous prince the supreme sacrifice of private morality. And he makes it abundantly clear that such double-dealing is to be used only as a weapon against the treachery of the base. 'As men are bad and would not observe their faith with you, so you are not bound to keep faith with them.'

That is to say, if treachery threatens to cause public disaster, all obligation to the treacherous is cancelled. Fight the traitor, then, with his own weapons, and in the circumstances the prince is no

traitor. Machiavelli conceives it a higher treachery to stand scrupulously to a private bond that no longer exists. In this abnegation of private scruple he seems to find a higher public obligation. As we shall see later, the reasoning is incomplete, but of the breadth and ultimate benevolence of his view there can be no question. He fails through the defect of his quality, that superiority of mind that flashes at once to the general issue, and disdains to explain itself minutely to the *profanum vulgus*. In *The Prince* he speaks as one of the governing classes to a member of his own 'guild'[1] or craft. For it must be remembered that Machiavelli's conception of popular liberty centred in the work of a benevolent despot. In that he saw the sole instrument of popular welfare.

These reflections, which might more naturally arise at the end than at the beginning of an essay on Machiavelli, have been purposely set in their present place in order that the following sketch of his life and work may be freed in some measure from the misconceptions that are not yet wholly cleared away from this tremendous character. To read Machiavelli's biography or his writings with a preconceived notion that here we have the arch-dissembler, the man to whom the negation of political morality was a first article of faith, is only to find in his every act and word more damning proof of those Satanic qualities with which he had been popularly invested. But to start with some statement, however incomplete, of the essential loftiness of his aim, makes for a juster understanding of that life of untiring devotion to Florence and to his country at large, which, however apparently crooked, led to the national ideal of a united Italy that was ultimately realised in Garibaldi.

Machiavelli,[2] scion of ancient Florentine burgher stock, was born in 1469. Of his early life, up to the date of his first appearance in Florentine affairs in 1498, the year that saw the death of Savonarola, we have no certain knowledge. The family had some pretensions to nobility and were allied to the lords of Montespertoli, a small commune not far from Florence. The statesman's branch of the Machiavelli were people of some substance, and counted among their number many priors and gonfaloniers of the earlier

[1] See Edward VII.'s reply to the Servian Deputation.

[2] For the facts following we are indebted to Villari, the ultimate authority.

republic. Niccolo's father was Bernardo, a juris-consult, who married Bartolommea, daughter of Stefano dei Nelli, and had by her four children—Totto, Niccolo, Primerana, and Ginevra. The wonderful second son grew up we know not how, for not until his twenty-eighth year have we a single documentary sign of his existence. He first makes himself known in two Latin letters to a Roman prelate about some family property. These letters enable us to conjecture that his education had been that of the young Florentine of his class. They also show that he had honour among his own people, for the Machiavelli *gens* had chosen him as their champion in this affair. Evidently he had already shown ability for business and diplomacy. This is manifest from the mingled acumen and flattery of the letters and from the fact that they achieved their object. But if they show that he at least knew Latin passably well, of his general education we know nothing. Yet he cannot have been entirely without culture, as Paolo Giovio says, and the young Florentine of Lorenzo's day must have been a dunce indeed to have evaded what was in the very air he breathed. A public that understood and relished every flying classical allusion left its youth to some extent independent of books. There we touch the point. It is possible, even probable, that at this period Niccolo was not 'bookish,' but he was certainly a most intelligent young man, a little careless, perhaps, and certainly no ascetic. Of the last we can be sure from certain traits that marked him through life. The weight of evidence is against his having known Greek at first-hand. He knew *about* the Greeks, later at any rate, and the knowledge stood him in good stead. A smattering of law made up the educational equipment of this consummate statesman-to-be, when he first entered the field of politics.

Machiavelli first appears on the stage of Florentine politics as a subordinate secretary to the Council of Ten. To this he was elected in 1498. In June of the same year the chief secretaryship fell vacant, and Machiavelli appears as one of four candidates for the office. On the 14th of July he was finally appointed, and began that memorable official career which lasted until the fall of the republic in 1512. His work falls into a series of epochs coinciding with various missions. The first was to Jacopo IV. of Appiano at Pontedera, who, serving with Florence against Pisa, was demanding

more men and more pay. Machiavelli persuaded him to waive the increase of pay and to be content with a reinforcement. His first great commission, however, was to Caterina Sforza, Countess of Imola and Forli. This powerful woman's friendship was of importance to the republic, for her domain was the key to Upper and Lower Italy, and was also a great recruiting-ground for mercenaries. Caterina's son, Ottaviano Riario, was a condottiere captain in the pay of Florence. At this moment he was discontented with his subsidy and disinclined to renew his command, which would very soon fall vacant. His mother wished to keep Florence on her side, for Cæsar Borgia, Duke of Valentinois, was threatening the Romagna. She wrote therefore to the signory, saying that she was anxious for Riario's subsidy to be renewed, but that her uncle Ludovico il Moro, Duke of Milan, had asked her for more men-at-arms, and she would be glad of advice as to her future action. On this the signory dispatched Machiavelli to Forli, to conduct negotiations. Caterina played off Milan against Florence, and while seeming to come to terms, although she had a better offer from her uncle, suddenly veered round and refused to ratify the bargain unless Florence would pledge itself to defend the countess's territory. This was impossible, for Machiavelli had express instructions that no such undertaking was to be given. He had therefore to return home, defeated in some measure by a woman's cunning, but not wholly unsuccessful. He enjoyed, indeed, a certain measure of success, and the republic was not ill-pleased with him. Florence cared little about the renewal of Riario's command, which meant a heavy expense. What the signory desired was the friendship of the countess, and that Machiavelli had secured. He had really scored by his mission; Florentine officialdom praised his letters highly, and the new secretary was held to have given proof of excellent ability. The matter remained open, and negotiations were continued in Florence by a confidential agent from Forli. Machiavelli's absence, too, had shown his fellow-citizens his worth. The routine business of his office was falling into confusion and desperate arrears. Florence was glad to have him back.

Meanwhile the war with Pisa was going badly for the Florentines, and Machiavelli had his hands full. Paolo Vitelli, the Florentine captain before Pisa, and his brother Vitellozzo, were suspected of

treachery in the field. The secretary satisfied himself of the truth of these accusations and went to work to bring the Vitelli to account. Acting through two commissioners, he drew the traitors into a trap. The commissioner asked the captains to dine and confer, and thereupon detained them. Vitellozzo escaped, but Paolo was taken and, after summary trial, beheaded. At the time Paolo's guilt was in doubt, but it now has been proved that he aimed at the restoration of the Medici. This was Machiavelli's first great stroke of public policy, a bold manœuvre, and one not over scrupulous, considering the scantiness of the available evidence against Vitelli; but the secretary was convinced personally of the existence of treachery, and on that he struck home, in the interests of the state.

The incident raised him still higher in the esteem of his fellow-citizens. Once more we find him for a time engaged in the routine business of his office, and then circumstances sent him abroad upon another mission. This time it was to Louis XII. of France. The circumstances which led up to this mission were somewhat complicated and may as well be indicated in outline. Louis had always laid claim to the Duchy of Milan, and no sooner had he come to the throne than he began to intrigue for the possession of the Lombard capital. With Venice he concluded an offensive and defensive alliance against Milan, and thus threw that city into a most difficult position. She found herself threatened at one and the same time by France and by Venice. The Duke of Milan knew very well that he could not look to Florence for help and accordingly he fled.

The French army, reinforced by Swiss, entered Milan, but the French rule was distasteful to the citizens, and when the Duke Ludovico suddenly presented himself before the city at the head of a large body of Swiss mercenaries, he was enthusiastically received by the very men who had driven him out. The French, with 10,000 Swiss mercenaries, again opposed him, and this time he was taken and consigned to a prison, from which he never returned. After these events Louis and Florence came to an arrangement, in consideration of which the siege of Pisa was to be prosecuted by forces supplied by Louis, who promised to supply 500 spearmen, 4000 Swiss, and 2000 Gascons, with artillery and stores. The bulk of this army was to be paid for by the Florentines at vexatious rates, for Louis's real idea in making this arrangement was to main-

tain an army in Italy at the expense of Florence. It may not seem obvious why in a sketch of Machiavelli so much attention should apparently be paid to the question of foreign mercenaries, but the reason will appear later, when we come to trace how important an effect the behaviour or misbehaviour of these very troops exercised upon Machiavelli's military policy. The French army before Pisa was not a success. Payment was not readily forthcoming, the Gascons and the Swiss were on the verge of mutiny.

Machiavelli was sent to investigate the state of affairs, and then returned to Florence, where matters were coming to a head between that city and King Louis. The king was disgusted with the result of the campaign, in which his troops had reaped nothing but dishonour, and, with characteristic meanness, he tried to throw the blame on the Florentines. In the meantime the enemies of Florence at the French court continued to fan the flame of the king's resentment, and at last it was considered necessary to send two Florentine envoys to Louis, in order, if possible, to come to some better understanding. These envoys were Francesco della Casa and Niccolo Machiavelli. Their work was difficult and thankless, and, to the scandal of Florence, her emissaries were most miserably paid. On none of his many embassies, missions in every one of which he did the state signal service, was Machiavelli properly remunerated. On the other hand, he was sadly out of pocket, even for ordinary expenses, and he was continually galled by the thought that he was unable to keep up an appearance consistent with the dignity of Florence. They dragged from town to town in France, following the court, with which they at last caught up at Nevers—and then the ambassadors came to close quarters with the king.

In these negotiations Machiavelli is the moving spirit, but technically he occupied only a secretarial position to Della Casa, who signed the documents which his wilier colleague composed. Louis professed that he was desirous of ending the war with Pisa, and he therefore demanded funds. The envoys replied that Florence had no funds, although such might be procured after the surrender of Pisa. Thereupon Louis pointed out that he could not be at the charges of a Florentine war, and so matters went on from day to day. Some two months after the beginning of the mission, Della Casa fell ill, and Machiavelli was left to continue the work.

He made the most minute inquiries regarding the state of affairs around him, and bore himself with the most extraordinary caution and diplomacy. Thenceforward the position improved. Florence yielded somewhat on the point of subsidies, and Machiavelli extracted from the king an assurance that Cæsar Borgia should not be allowed to attack Florence. This point was vital to the welfare of the Florentines, for amid all the distractions of the city at home and abroad, her never-ceasing dread was lest Cæsar Borgia, Duke of Valentinois, should attempt to restore the Medici family to despotic power. His continual uneasy presence upon the horizon is of the most vital importance to the political career of Niccolo Machiavelli.

In his communications to his government Machiavelli now begins to foreshadow roughly but unmistakably that political philosophy which was afterwards to find complete expression in his discourses and in *The Prince*. Talking of a possible enemy, a man with a grievance, who might if he were offended still further prejudice the Florentines with the French king, Machiavelli says: 'De Scruciatis has rendered and might again render useful services to the republic. I know nothing of this lawsuit of his, but I do know that while your standing with his French majesty is so airy and precarious, few can help you, and all can injure you. Wherefore it is necessary to soothe him with smooth words, otherwise, at the first letter of yours that comes here, he will be like a thunderbolt in his course.' He continues: 'The evil that this man may say will be believed more easily than any good that he may have said. Furthermore, he is a man of some credit, very daring, loquacious, persistent, terrible, and being without measure in his passions, is capable of effecting somewhat in all that he undertakes.' With these words, so deeply characteristic of his statecraft, Machiavelli concluded his embassy, and returned to Florence for another period of routine work. He returned with great honour, and his mission was held to have been entirely creditable to the republic.

Machiavelli's next great mission was the most important in his career, for in it he was matched against the arch-intriguer Cæsar Borgia himself. Before, however, he came to this tussle of wits, he had been involved in various matters, lesser, yet contributing to the main event. There had been tumults in Pistoja, where Machiavelli was twice sent to report upon affairs, and if possible

restore order. Meanwhile Cæsar Borgia, Duke of Valentinois, had appeared in Tuscany, at the head of a disorderly soldiery, and demanded from Florence that he should be allowed to pass through their territory. Florence, thoroughly alarmed, contrived to send 12,000 ducats to Louis XII. as a sort of insurance. The money had the desired effect, and Louis was certainly disposed to take the side of Florence. Meanwhile Valentinois became more troublesome. The Orsini and the Vitelli threatened the frontiers, and a man of the Medici party actually demanded the restoration of that family.

Florence made active preparations to deal with these intruders under her very walls, and Machiavelli took the keenest interest in matters which one might have thought beyond the scope of a mere secretary; but these events and others were forming in his mind his great conception of a national militia. When their preparations were complete, the Florentines gave permission to the duke to pass, but the Orsini and the Vitelli must not accompany him. With this condition he would have nothing to do, and advanced without leave, burning and pillaging. The Florentines then gave him a warning which he knew better than to disregard. The wily Cæsar professed friendship, and said he would be glad to serve as a captain in the pay of Florence. He must, however, be allowed to advance to Piombino, and also they must recall Piero de' Medici, and change the form of government in Florence. The reply of Florence was what might be expected. He might march on, but there was to be no change of government. He was bidden very sharply to hold his tongue, as Florentine affairs were no business of his, and, what was more, the city was done for ever with the Medici. Cæsar took the hint, and also took service with Florence for three years at 36,000 ducats per annum. Thereupon he fought and pillaged his way to Piombino. For a time, however, his energies were diverted by the war with Naples, in which Frederick was finally driven out, and the House of Aragon was extinguished. In the meantime Arezzo rebelled against Florence in the interests of the Medici, and the Florentines looked to France for help.

At this moment Cæsar again intervened, and demanded that Florence should send some one to confer with him at Urbino, where he had just driven out Montefeltro. Machiavelli and Bishop Francesco Soderini were sent to treat with Valentinois, and Borgia

assured them that he wished a clear issue between him and the Florentines. It must be either friend or enemy. Should they decline his friendship, he would be justified before God and man in seeking every means to ensure the safety of his dominions, which bordered to so great an extent upon those of Florence. He said he knew that Florence would willingly abandon him, and that it had sought to make his position difficult alike with his father the Pope, and with the King of France. He ended with a categorical demand that Florence should change her government. If she did so, he would be her friend—if not, she must count on his enmity. Cæsar was told that Florence had the government she desired, that if he wished to show his friendship, he must withdraw his creatures from Arezzo. The duke replied that the Aretine rebels were acting on their own account. But while they had no direct authority from him, he was not ill-pleased that Florence was having trouble because of Arezzo. He considered it a well-merited lesson for the Florentines. The negotiations could go no further, and the ambassadors communicated with their government. The most remarkable thing about this embassy, which is only preliminary to Machiavelli's great mission to the Duke of Valentinois, is that it marks the first manifestation of that extraordinary admiration for the mind and talents of Cæsar Borgia, which for a time captivated the intellect of the Florentine secretary. He recommended that Florence should pay the expenses of help which was on the way from France, and with this reinforcement Florence finally reduced Arezzo.

Machiavelli was on the scene, and, moved by these events, he wrote a treatise upon the method of treating the rebels. In it are to be found the germs of all his political philosophy. Some slight changes in the Florentine method of government were now effected by the general consent of the people, but, needless to say, with no reference to the demand of Cæsar Borgia. The most important of these changes for Machiavelli was the appointment of a gonfalonier for life. The choice of the citizens fell upon the secretary's friend, Piero Soderini, brother of the Bishop of Volterra. Soderini's friendship for Machiavelli increased the secretary's influence, and was also the cause of his employment in weighty state affairs.

The year 1502 saw Machiavelli entrusted with what was to prove the most important mission of his life, and one that brought

BENVENUTO CELLINI'S MODEL IN WAX
FOR HIS " PERSEUS "

National Museum, Florence

Photo Alinari

him the greatest credit. Cæsar Borgia, who had assumed the title of Duke of the Romagna, Valencia and Urbino, Prince of Andrea, Lord of Piombino, gonfalonier and captain-general of the Church, advaneed on Bologna, but France intervened, saying there must be no further aggrandisement of the Borgia in Italy. At the same time the duke's principal captains, seeing that he kept faith with none, resolved to save themselves by attacking him. They asked help from Florence, and soon had the whole Duchy of Romagna in revolt, the duke being left with only a few fortresses.

Cæsar asked and received aid from France, and this entirely alarmed the conspirators. Valentinois again invited the presence of an embassy, for Florence was too important to be alienated entirely, and the choice of the Ten again fell upon Machiavelli. He was commissioned to make large protestations of friendship, and to assure the duke that Florence had never helped the conspirators, in spite of their request for aid. He was left considerable latitude on this point, but on all others he was to refer to his government.

He was also commissioned to ask for safe conduct for Florentine merchants on their way to and from the East, through the duke's dominions, and in this matter he was to be urgent, as it was of vital importance to the city—the Italian reads, 'The very stomach of the city.' Machiavelli was not altogether willing to go, partly because his status was as yet hardly that of an ambassador, and partly because he knew the difficulty that a man in his position must have in meeting Cæsar Borgia in argument. He was, however, more than equal to the occasion. Another probable reason for his reluctance was that he had just married, but on consideration of the facts, it is very doubtful whether this question distressed him seriously. We know that, once started on his journey, he did not trouble to write to the lady, but contented himself with sending messages through his friends, particularly his great crony, Buonaccorsi. To his worthy correspondent this was a source of considerable trouble, for the wife of Machiavelli, being aggrieved at her husband's silence, came every day to the chancery, and made herself a complete nuisance to ministers. Buonaccorsi writes to Machiavelli, barely a fortnight after he had started, that 'Marietta was complaining of his remaining absent so long, when he had promised to come back to her in a week. She would not write

herself, but she is doing thousands of mad things, so, in the devil's name, pray come back!' says Buonaccorsi. Two months later things had grown much more serious. Hear his friend again: 'Monna Marietta blasphemes God, and thinks that she has thrown away both herself and her property; for goodness' sake, give orders that she may have her own dower like others of her position, otherwise she will lose all patience with you. I now sit in your place at certain little suppers given by the Ten.'

The last remark is characteristic of the letters which passed between Machiavelli and Buonaccorsi throughout their long friendship. There is no more curious symptom of the temper of the Florentines of that age than the extraordinary circumstance that these two men, weighted with the heaviest concerns of state, wrote to each other in a manner that would have been unbecoming in a pair of profligate students. There is no doubt—in fact, it can be proved—that they exaggerated a great deal for the sake of effect, but even allowing for misrepresentation and over-statement, there can be no question that Machiavelli and Buonaccorsi were, in this respect, anything but an example to the youth of Florence.

To return, however, from this digression, which, it is hoped, may be justified as a small point of illumination on Machiavelli's complex character, we must now follow in outline his great mission to the Duke of the Romagna. Cæsar Borgia was not easy of access. When he consented to receive the ambassador, he spoke of an alliance. He wished his condotta—that is, his command in respect of a certain subsidy—to be formally confirmed. To these requests Machiavelli, in virtue of his commission, could only make strong protestations of friendship. Thereupon the duke would cry 'Ecco! Nothing can be settled with these Florentines.' From time to time, however, he kept summoning Machiavelli, and would try to draw him into traps. One day he told him that in past time Baglioni had begged for a letter empowering him to follow Vitellozzo Vitelli (the suspected traitor before Pisa, and present rebel holder of Arezzo) and assist him in the restoration of the Medici to Florence, and that he—Valentinois—had written the letter. 'Now I know not,' he continued, looking at Machiavelli, 'whether he may have boasted of this to lay the blame at my door.' Whereupon the prudent secretary replied 'that he knew nothing of the matter.'

Again, he confided to Machiavelli with much gravity how Paolo Orsini declared the Florentines had just offered him a condotta for the army before Pisa, and that he had refused it. Machiavelli's *riposte* was to ask whether Orsini had given the name of the person bearing the offer, or had shown the letter, and if he was in the habit of telling lies. The duke, perceiving that the secretary would not fall into the trap, replied that Orsini had neither mentioned names nor shown letters, but had told plenty of lies. And so the matter passed off in laughter, 'though at first,' says Machiavelli, 'he had spoken of it with disquiet.' Matters dragged on until January of the next year, in which month Valentinois, acting on behalf of Florence, finally ran the rebellious Vitellozzo Vitelli and Orsini to earth in Sinigaglia, sacked the town, and put the rebels to death.

He saved Orsini until he could see what the Pope meant to do in Rome with other members of that house. After this exploit of the duke's, Machiavelli writes from Assisi, whither he had followed Valentinois, wondering that no embassy has come to congratulate the duke, who has rid Florence of two enemies, whom the republic could not have put an end to alone, save at the cost of 200,000 ducats. It is worthy of remark that in reviewing Machiavelli's embassies it is difficult to trace exactly what he accomplished; but his function differed somewhat from that of the modern ambassador. As Macaulay says, 'He had to discharge functions far more delicate than transmitting orders of knighthood, introducing tourists, or presenting his brethren with the homage of his high consideration. He was an advocate to whose management the dearest interests of his clients were entrusted, a spy clothed with an inviolable character. Instead of consulting, by a reserved manner and an ingenious style, the dignity of those whom he represented, he was to plunge into all the intrigues of the court at which he resided, to discover and flatter every weakness of the prince, and of the favourite who governed the prince, and of the lacquey who governed the favourite. He was to compliment the mistress and bribe the confessor, to panegyrise or supplicate, to laugh or weep, to accommodate himself to every caprice, to lull every suspicion, to treasure every hint, to be everything, to observe everything, to endure everything. High as the art of political intrigue had been carried in Italy, these were times which required it all.' It was in the extraordinary cleverness and

skill with which Machiavelli kept his government at home furnished with information, in circumstances where information was most difficult to procure, that the secretary's great services to the republic lay. He came out of mission after mission with increasing credit.

Gradually, as his foreign employments progressed, we can trace in his reports and in his commentaries the formulation of that political science of which he is the founder. Twice again he was ambassador to France, twice to Rome, and once to the Emperor Maximilian. These missions are not of such supreme importance as that to the Duke of Valentinois, but they were all fruitful, especially to Machiavelli's own intellectual development. Not the least interesting result of his mission to the Emperor was his notes upon Germany and Switzerland. Apart from mere state considerations, however, the most important point in Machiavelli's mission to Valentinois is the captivation of the secretary's intellect by that consummate scoundrel. They had met like two skilled fencers, and the odds of battle had been fairly even, with a slight grain of advantage, perhaps, in Machiavelli's case. All his writings bearing on this mission show that he had been seized with a profound admiration for the unscrupulousness of Cæsar Borgia. It must not be thought that he weighed Borgia's character in any moral balance. Machiavelli's attitude towards politics is, as we have already hinted, intensely practical. In Cæsar Borgia he saw a man who could use the swiftest means to an end without fear or favour, and it was this that made an idealised Cæsar Borgia the hero of Machiavelli's *Prince*. The secretary looked on unappalled when Cæsar gave the final proof of his relentless cunning, and crushed his rebel captains at Sinigaglia, yet the incident made an ineffaceable impression on his mind. But in reading his eulogies of Valentinois it must always be remembered that Machiavelli is speaking, as it were, in the character of a super-man. And the paradox is this. Where he is so tremendously practical he is nevertheless working in the realm of transcendental theory. With that grasped, it may be possible to understand Machiavelli. In the intervals of his embassies, Machiavelli returned to the work of his secretariat, which was arduous enough, for besides her other external troubles Florence was still occupied with the weary siege of Pisa. From what he had seen of military operations, Machiavelli had formed a new idea, which his patriotism

had raised almost to a passion. He had noted the defection of the Swiss before Pisa, and from that he had acquired a deep distrust of mercenary soldiery. He dreamed of establishing for Florence a highly trained National Militia, in which men could serve for the love of country rather than for pay. Nor did he let this remain a dream. He threw himself into the work with extraordinary ardour, and gradually, although as a drill sergeant he cut but a poor figure, he brought the scheme to perfection. His treatise on a National Militia is not disdained by tacticians, although Paolo is ungenerous enough to say it was written by a man who would not manœuvre a single company.

Here, perhaps, we may digress for a moment to tell a story, merely because it so aptly illustrates the gay versatility of those deep thinkers of the Renaissance. One day Machiavelli was anxious to illustrate some manœuvre regarding which he had written most creditably. For two hours he kept three thousand men broiling in the sun, without being able to effect his purpose. One is reminded of young Edward Waverley, who discovered on joining his regiment that what had seemed so easy in a book of tactics became in the field a matter of nice calculation, and quick handling of mental arithmetical problems. At last Giovanni de' Medici, the greatest of the condottiere captains, John of the Black Bands, lost patience, and with the aid of the drums, put the troops through the manœuvre in a most masterly manner. Now mark what Machiavelli did. In no way disconcerted or offended, the secretary went at once with the officers to dinner, and in order to compensate them for the loss of time he had caused them, he told them in his inimitable manner one of the merriest stories from the scandalous pages of Bandello. The incident was entirely typical of an age where letters were never far away from the thoughts even of its great soldiers. A little earlier he might have recited something from Ovid, or Propertius, or even Petronius, but the literary interest of the times was now centring in native Italian literature, so the compensation for lost time was a story from Bandello.

Only once in the long course of his secretariat did Machiavelli lend himself to any public folly, but there is one slip in every great career, and we need not therefore be too much surprised at the secretary's favouring that wild-cat scheme—the damming of the

Arno—by which some mad genius hoped to reduce Pisa. The work —one of the maddest on record—was gaily undertaken by the Florentines, with Machiavelli's full approval. It was calculated that the colossal canal necessary for the undertaking could be dug in 60,000 working-days, that is to say, 2000 workmen would do it in a month. There is a Gargantuan comicality in the spectacle of the Florentines feverishly tearing up mother earth in order to do hasty violence to nature, as though it were not a first axiom of engineering that the artificer must always meet with the unexpected difficulty. So ill-considered a plan as the damming of the Arno was fruitful of unusual trouble, and at last, in despair, the work had to be given up, and the Pisans, issuing from their walls, derisively filled up the yawning chasm. It cannot be discovered, however, that his countenance of this failure brought Machiavelli into any disgrace. So long as Florence remained a republic, he retained the esteem of his fellow-citizens. His fame was at its greatest height in 1506, when at length Pisa was reduced, and he entered it with the victors, being admonished by a friend to begin his entry if possible a few minutes after 13 o'clock—that being always an hour of good omen to Florentines. Amid all these cares of the chancellery and the field, Machiavelli seemed to have found increasing time for the practice of literature. He appears with his *Decennali*—poems of a patriotic spirit—and his *Discourses on the Decades of Livy*, which, in the manner of the times, sought to apply the example of antiquity to modern life, always with a patriotic intention. But the end of his public career was at hand, and also the end of a great age. The Emperor Charles v. was threatening Italy. He overran her borders, and Florence, after a gallant but futile defence of her ancient liberties by Machiavelli's citizen militia, once more saw the restoration of the Medici. Machiavelli was imprisoned and put to the question, enduring four turns of the rack, with what satisfaction to his examiners we do not know.

Disheartened, he retired to the country, where he ate out his heart, solacing himself alternately with literature and with the delights, such as they were, of the countryside. He gives a picture of his day in retirement that brings us nearer to the man himself than probably any other thing that he has written. During the morning, he walks about and takes an interest, such as he can, in

the work of the labourers in the fields. He chats with rustics of country matters, finally he stops at an inn, where he plays cards with the local characters. Towards sunset, muddy and bedraggled, he goes home, and then assumes a new rôle. The evening is to be given to polite literature, and memories of the cultured society of Florence compel him to dress the part. He lays aside his muddy vesture, and puts on his most sumptuous robe. Thus arrayed, and fully in the spirit of his new part, he sits down to read or to compose, and amid those sharp contrasts, those homely mornings of make-shift recreation amid utter boredom, these splendid nights of studious solitude and high thinking, when, amid it all, he longed that he might have a little spade-work to do, even from the hated Medici, the *Prince* was born.

It is curious to reflect that that treatise was composed when Machiavelli was fresh from the society of the innkeeper, the butcher, the miller, and a pair of bakers. 'With these companions,' he says, 'I played the fool all day, at cards or backgammon; a thousand squabbles, a thousand insults and abusive dialogues took place, while we haggled over a farthing, and shouted loud enough to be heard from San Casciano.'

And then comes the contrast.

'But when evening falls, I go home and enter my writing-room. On the threshold I put off my country habit, filthy with mud and mire, and array myself in royal, courtly garments; thus worthily attired, I make my entrance into the ancient courts of the men of old, where they receive me with love, and where I feed upon that food, which only is my own, and for which I was born.' He tells how he questions them, and how they, moved by their humanity, make answer. And for four hours' space 'I feel no annoyance, forget all care, poverty cannot frighten, nor death appal me, I am carried away to their society.' Then he adds, quoting Dante, that as there is no knowledge unless we retain what we have learned, he had set down what he had gained from the discourse of the ancients in a treatise, 'De Principatibus.' The dedication of this work to the young Lorenzo de' Medici is a circumstance which calls for explanation and even for justification. This sudden cringing to the tyrant house by the very man who had been the bulwark of Florentine liberty, requires something more than casuistry to explain it away.

Machiavelli had desired that these Signori Medici should give him a stone to roll in order to save him from the boredom of his inaction. The reasons by which he justified to himself this *volte face* were probably these. He saw that the Pope seemed disposed to favour the establishment of a new state in Italy, and in this it was possible that, as Villari suggests, Machiavelli caught some glimpse of a united Italy. We have seen how his belief was entirely fixed upon a benevolent despot, as the only means of securing the common weal. If, then, such a state were to be set up, might not the young Lorenzo de' Medici, taught by Machiavelli, be the means of restoring Italian liberty? The argument is perhaps a little tortuous, a little strained, but it seems to be the only satisfactory account of an inconsistency that has given pain to those who have desired to do justice to Machiavelli. Into the young Lorenzo's ears, therefore, Machiavelli poured all that he had learned in his hours of splendid solitude with the ancients, qualified by what he had been taught by the deep experience of his active political life.

If there are chapters in the *Prince* that are as merciless as they are shameless in their cynicism, it is nevertheless impossible to read the work without detecting the pure note of patriotism that runs through it all. Nowhere can the critic place his finger upon a passage that makes for the ruler's self-aggrandisement—everywhere it is the interest of the state that he has at heart, and by the state we must remember he means the people. His system, as we have already hinted, is not complete; his advocacy of the entire abrogation of moral scruple, as the highest duty on certain occasions of a ruler, is based on a conception of life that will not stand the highest test of ethics. It is because men are in the main bad, and will not act uprightly, that Machiavelli expounds the necessity of a prince's breaking faith. He does not realise that the welfare of the state is not only the welfare of the individual, but is based upon individual character, and that if the ruler, who is also a member of the commonwealth, acts perfidiously or immorally, he is weakening the whole social fabric. More and more in the times that have elapsed since Machiavelli's day, men have come to value and to recognise, as a primal necessity, the personal character, the absolute honesty and trustworthiness of those in high places, and it is there that modern political philosophers have to part company with Machiavelli.

Macaulay sums up the fallacy of the *Prince* in one sentence: 'The means had been more deeply considered than the ends.' It is a little doubtful whether Macaulay has exactly hit the point. He is right in his assignment of the source of the fallacy, but it is hardly fair to Machiavelli to say that he did not consider the ends. It is just the depth and the height of his consideration of the ends that saves the *Prince* from being a monstrosity, but while his enthusiasm for the ends is undeniable, the practicality of his mind, the wealth and singularity of his experience, leads him to dwell in his mere text more obviously on the consideration of means than of ends. The transcendental theory escapes all but the most acute observers: the concrete example comes home with undue force, and that is why the *Prince* has been so grievously misunderstood. The closing passage, which leads up to a superb quotation from Petrarch, is a worthy conclusion to the book that is the first masterpiece of noble and melodious Italian prose; almost in its nobility it atones for any cynicism of doctrine in the earlier pages. He impresses upon the young Lorenzo that now is the hour to act. 'This opportunity must not be suffered to pass of letting Italy, after so long a time, at last behold her saviour, nor can I find words to describe the love with which he will be hailed in all the provinces that have suffered through these foreign deluges, the thirst for vengeance, the stubborn fidelity, the piety, the fears that he would meet. What gates would be closed against him, what Italian would be found to refuse him homage? This rule of the barbarians stinks in the nostrils of us all. Then let your illustrious house assume this enterprise in the spirit and the confidence wherewith just enterprises are begun, that so under your flag this land of ours may be ennobled, and that under your auspices may be brought to pass that prophecy of Petrarch:

> 'Lo, valour against rage
> Shall take up arms, nor shall the fight be long;
> For that old heritage
> Of courage in Italian hearts is stout and strong.'

Here the age no less than Machiavelli speaks. The first master of modern Italian prose rises in this peroration on the wings of the great master of the Italian lyric. No longer is the apt quotation

sought from the ancient Roman poets, but in the lines of the Italian singer there breathes that enthusiasm for antiquity which characterised Rienzi, Petrarch, the long line of the scholars, and still held Machiavelli, although he gave it expression in his native tongue. Another age was at hand, the age of Ariosto and the Romancers, an age whose blossoming was the herald of decay. The armies of Charles v. had sacked Rome, Italy lay devastated, and the Renaissance was dying or dead. Henceforward the fruits of Italian culture have to be sought elsewhere.

The *Prince* was without practical result, but it brought Machiavelli some minor employment from the Medici, although he was never appointed again to his old office as secretary to the war department. They gave him, however, an embassy to the courts of Maximilian and Louis, to arrange for the organisation of a separate province of the Franciscan order, which that congregation, domiciled at Carpi, desired to found in the Tuscan capital. None of Machiavelli's other commissions under the Medici were of very great importance, but if he was not actively engaged in public duties he had the more leisure for literary work. Previous to the year 1516, when the Medici took him into favour, he had produced his *Discourses on Livy*, and these he recited at the assemblies of the revived Florentine academies in the Oricellarii gardens, otherwise known as the Ruccellai gardens. After his entry into the service of the Medici, however, he produced a work that is hardly second to the *Prince* in importance, if something less in notoriety. This was his Florentine history—a book that marks an epoch in historical writing. Hitherto the historians of Florence and of every other place had been mere annalists and chroniclers, setting down the events of succeeding days and years without any conception that underneath the apparently fortuitous, there might be discoverable some philosophic principle. The new conception of history awakes in Machiavelli's *Historia Fiorentina*. The 'Florentine History,' it must be confessed, is sometimes inaccurate, but, as Macaulay says, 'it may be doubted whether by the more exact modern method more exact notions are conveyed to the reader. The best portraits are perhaps those with a slight mixture of caricature, and we are not certain that the best histories are not those in which the exaggeration of fictitious narrative is judiciously em-

ployed. Something is lost in accuracy, but much is gained in effect. The fainter lines are neglected, but the great characteristic features are imprinted on the mind for ever.' This is no doubt abominable heresy, even more abominable to-day, perhaps, than it was in Macaulay's time, but as a criticism of Machiavelli's Florentine history it could not be bettered. Machiavelli was the first to whom it occurred that there might be some continuous thread running through the history of a nation. He traced the story of Florence in its continuity, and out of his experience of political philosophy he wove a philosophy of history. He examined causes, he discerned characteristics, he was the first to achieve historical perspective: for the old chroniclers one event was as important as another. Machiavelli was the first to realise the true proportion of his detail. Symonds says: 'There is something in his view of national existence beyond the reach of even the profoundest of the classical historians. His style is adequate to the matter of his work. His wildest generalisations have the substance of reality. The element of unreality, if such there be, is due to a misconception of human nature. Machiavelli seems to have studied men only in masses, or as political instruments, never as feeling and thinking personalities.'

The history, which begins with a most illuminating survey of the state of Italy from the fall of the Roman Empire until the first beginnings of Florence, is carried on to the death of Lorenzo de' Medici, the Great Lorenzo, grandson of Cosimo. Machiavelli had intended to go further, and to bring the story down to his own day, but he was prevented by death. The work was carried on by Guicciardini, who, appreciating the new method of Machiavelli, and working on the same lines, told the story of the final subjugation of Italy by the forces of Spain and of the Empire.

Machiavelli died untimely. The cause of his death, it is said, was an inopportune dose of medicine. He departed in outward conformity with the Church and was confessed by a Friar. The legend that he passed away with a blasphemy on his lips is more than likely to be an invention, in conformity with the misconceptions which grew up around his name and character. During the counter-Reformation, not many years after his death, he became the object of intense hatred. He was spoken against, and his works were

banned by the Inquisition. Gradually his name became a synonym for every sort of political crime, and from it was coined an adjective, connoting the last possible rascality. These misconceptions have, to a great extent, blinded the popular mind to the real greatness of Machiavelli as a world-figure. He was the consummate ambassador, the perfect secretary, the true patriot, far-seeing, and always with a single eye to the good of his country. He held public office for many years, and, as far as we know, discharged his duties with complete integrity. There is no record of any impeachment or prosecution, no record of even a passing wave of unpopularity. Florence trusted him, even leaned upon him. He, the mere man of letters, taught her how to defend herself, and put the sword into her hand. He may not have shone on the drill-ground, but as a writer on strategy he is of high consideration.

His ordinance for the militia, and his more elaborate *Art of War* are a worthy tribute to his versatility. He also found time to be a poet and playwright, and it has been remarked that had he been able to devote himself entirely to the stage he would have brought about a noteworthy development in the Italian drama, for he had, above all, the sense of the theatre. His poems are of minor consideration. His *Discourses of Livy* are not much above elegant trifling. But his influence on literary methods has been tremendous. Machiavelli invented political philosophy and scientific history: at the same time he did for Italian prose what Dante had done for Italian verse. As to his private character, his morals were those of a Florentine of his age and class. It is singular, however, and we do not think it has hitherto been remarked, that in his diplomatic and official actions we find no suggestion that this monster of cruelty and duplicity ever committed any monstrously cruel or very perfidious public act. He applauds, it is true, such arch-treacheries as Cæsar Borgia's slaughter of his captains at Sinigaglia, but such applause we are inclined to regard as theoretical—it is part of the scheme of the *Prince*. Varchi has left it on record that he was a friend of virtuous men, but, being touched with the prevailing odium, he adds that he was worthy to have received from nature either less genius or a better mind. Those who, at a greater distance than Varchi, have the opportunity of studying Machiavelli, may still wish him in some particulars a better mind, but having in view the services he

has done to government and to literature, they will certainly not regret Machiavelli's gift of superabundant genius. It is just the intensity and the remoteness of that great mind in its higher manifestations that leave Machiavelli, study him as we will, always elusive, always a fascinating enigma.

CHAPTER XIX

WOMEN OF THE RENAISSANCE

It is not unnatural that the glamour of high romance should serve as a setting for those women, brilliant, brave, or beautiful, who stand out, prominent figures, in the pageant of the Renaissance movement. They do not appeal from the pages of history alone, they appear to us in their habit as they lived on the canvases of Titian, Benozzo Gozzoli, Raphael, Bronzino, da Predis, and many another, and claim even from this twentieth century the measure of admiration that their own times could not deny. The success of women in years when man was little better than a savage inspired by a great thought, astonishes us, and the more deeply we study the character of the men who directed the Renaissance movement, the more surprising it becomes that women could have mastered them, and expressed themselves if only for a brief period. In the eyes of the Middle Ages woman was the proper object of suspicion. By woman sin came into the world, by woman it was perpetuated. A girl was, at best, the medium by which her father might contract an alliance with some family whose association might prove profitable to him; her own wishes in the matter would neither be questioned nor expressed. She was the chattel of her parents until she became the chattel of her husband, who would argue, if occasion arose, with a stick rather than his tongue. Until the revival of learning the range of woman's knowledge was very much circumscribed, but some of the brilliant intelligences rose superior to their opportunities, Italy, Spain, and France producing in turn women whose gifts seemed to come to them from within and not from without, and have secured a very long period of posthumous fame. Catherine of Siena, Santa Teresa, and in later years Joan of Arc stand for examples, but one feels that no conditions however adverse could have availed to compel them to leave their message undelivered. In the lives of the stateswomen and rulers to whom reference must

be made, chance of course was an all-powerful element. Doubtless there were many women unknown to fame in whom was all the capacity for state affairs that was displayed by Beatrice and Isabella d'Este, by Catherine, Queen of Cyprus, by Lucrezia Crivelli and Lucrezia Borgia, by Vittoria Colonna and Bianca Capello. The fact we have to regard with special interest is, that when the times demanded a great woman she was forthcoming, although the tendency of the age was to keep the sex as far as possible in the background, to treat it as though it existed only for the proper convenience of man and the perpetuation of the race.

The romance of the age of chivalry has dwindled to a very small dimension in the light of critical research. Crusaders, Knights Errant, and the rest will not bear too close an investigation. Ignorant, unclean, dissolute and cruel, they have nothing to recommend them save personal bravery, and even their courage was physical rather than moral. The effect of the Renaissance upon men whose education was of the smallest, and whose passions were well-nigh uncontrollable, was just what might have been expected, and if it is discussed here, the brief comment is designed only to show what manner of man it was with whom the women who helped to make certain phases of the Renaissance glorious and memorable had to cope. The Renaissance did but graft definite qualities of brain and hand upon the rough and ready material of mediævalism, it tinctured a robust and strenuous blackguardism with culture, and in some rare cases the tincture seemed to pervade the entire organism. But as a rule the blackguard was no less a blackguard by reason of his mental or emotional development. Symonds, in his wholly admirable work on the Renaissance, takes as types for which the movement was entirely responsible Benvenuto Cellini, Machiavelli, and Pietro Aretino—'foul of heart and foul of tongue,' lawless artist, conscienceless statesman, and blackmailing journalist. Elsewhere the lives of two of these extraordinary men have been examined at length, and in place of Aretino, the great Pope of the Borgian house, Alexander VI. has been selected. It suffices for the moment that each stands in his way for a type of non-moral man, and this is a generous estimate of their character, for many would hold that one and all were grossly immoral, and it involves considerable labour to confute the opinion. But it is important

to recollect that the Renaissance did no more than stimulate men's minds and leave their morals where it found them. Men in every stage of life kept their religious beliefs in one compartment of the soul. For the rest they were arrogant, deceitful, brave, boastful, often generous, impulsive, imaginative, pleased with themselves. They were great brawlers, and were sexually vicious beyond description. A great part of their exuberance was undoubtedly the outcome of the stirring times in which they lived. To-day they might be in a palace and next week in a prison cell. To-day they might be basking in the sun of a great man's favour, and this time next month there might be in all the city of their adoption none so poor as to do them reverence. Small wonder, then, that they lived for the hour. In the absence of law and order they were a law to themselves. Vice and virtue were equally powerful to move them, and they had the rare pleasure of knowing that, if their gifts were but great enough, they would stand above the law. Here then, in brief, is the class of man with which the most prominent women of the Renaissance were associated. This was the material they were called upon to subdue and direct.

Perhaps it was the well-sustained persecution from which women suffered that served to establish the measure of unity among them that was the beginning of success. As soon as the Renaissance began to influence men's lives, we find women emerging from their seclusion, and endeavouring to fight their natural foe with other weapons than the short-lived ones of physical attractiveness. They sought at once to develop the area of their powers by giving to love refinements with which it had been associated hitherto only in theory. The revival of learning introduced among women of the educated and wealthy classes a certain revival of the spirit of Platonic love, and in obedience to this spirit they widened the bounds of chivalry, sought to develop the moral law, and were inclined to disregard the normal relations of the sexes. In the end, of course, this attempt to create magnified, non-natural women brought about disaster. The Platonist, if we may use the word with a certain deliberate ambiguity, was ousted by the skilled courtesan. Montaigne speaks bitterly of Platonism, and describes it as the art of pretending that paste is diamonds, but the great philosopher would seem to have overlooked the enormous difficulties that lay

PORTRAIT ATTRIBUTED TO LEONARDO DA VINCI

This picture from the Louvre is probably not by Leonardo, and certainly does not represent Lucrezia Crivelli. Formerly known as a "Portrait of a Lady," it is still miscalled "La Belle Ferronnière."

before women who saw that they could not hope to find salvation for themselves until such time as they could exercise some refining influence upon the unadulterated animalism of their lords. It was in the effort to civilise man and to develop the germ of idealism that the women of the Renaissance accomplished great things, and so much should be granted even by those who look askance at Platonics. There was not much hope for the women who lacked courage and initiative in an age when a man would betroth his daughter before she was five and have her married before she entered her teens. Only community of interest and a sense of common duty could avail to develop progress and move womankind out of the slough of despond. The conditions were ripe for a combined effort in the beginning of the fourteenth century. Middle Europe was subject to visitations of the pestilence, and the bravest of women would not hesitate to follow the example of St. Catherine, who in the summer of 1348 had laboured so nobly in Siena. Then again, in times when the plague was not at hand, there was ample demand for women who knew anything of the healing arts. To be sure, astrologers still taught that the Sun, Jupiter, and Venus ruled the human body between them, each taking certain specified organs; but in course of time the women learnt to defy not only the Sun and the Planets, but those qualified practitioners who, in the fourteenth and fifteenth century as in the twentieth, spared no pains to give trouble to the woman practitioner, finding in the accident of her sex proof positive of her incapacity.

The small beginnings of a feminist movement, to use a term that has been somewhat degraded by its twentieth-century acceptation invested the sex with a special interest. Not only in Italy but in other countries where the revival of learning was associated with considerable commercial developments, there came a movement towards the education of women, a movement that was not founded upon any desire to benefit the women themselves. Great traders (the first beginnings in many cases of an aristocracy), small tyrants, and prominent men of affairs sought alliances with royal or noble houses, and though the dowry with which they could send their daughters to a desirable husband was of course the matter of first importance, it was felt that the jewel should be worthy of the casket. Consequently, as soon as the spirit of learning was abroad, and it was

seen that, in spite of mediæval conjectures to the contrary, women had a measure of capacity, men made haste to give the soundest possible instruction to their daughters; and when we turn to consider in detail the lives of a few very prominent women, we shall find that they had a good classical education and were mastering knowledge at a time when their descendants of like age are playing in the nursery. An ambitious child could travel far in the company of an accomplished tutor, for knowledge was not boundless as it is to-day. A great scholar might claim that he knew everything there was to know; several did, and in the fifteenth century, at least, such a claim would be far less absurd than it may appear to us. So fathers educated their daughters, betrothed them to the best advantage and married them while they were still young amid scenes of such extravagant magnificence that in some Italian states limits to the expenditure were set by law. For parent, and perhaps for husband, the educational experiment was at an end, but for the woman the case was different. Poetry, philosophy, and the classics had been a part of her apprenticeship to life, but there was another side to the experiences, for many girls passed before marriage to the household of some great lady who kept a court, and here doubtless there was abundant opportunity for the development of the Platonic or any other ideal.

In connection with Platonism the enormous influence exercised by Dante must not be overlooked, and although there were well-known writers whose tastes were less ascetic, notably Boccaccio, they lacked an equal currency. The general tendency of the life of the young girl of wealth and good position in Renaissance times was distinctly healthy, and it is interesting to find that such a close and skilled observer as Monsieur Bourget has discovered a great similiarity of type between the girls of the Italian Renaissance and their rather older sisters of the United States of America of the present day.

Undoubtedly, early marriage had much to commend it. Preceded by close study and followed by a certain measure of responsibility, it set no defined limits to life. It encouraged young women to develop their own individuality without sacrificing long years in the pursuit of man. For them there was no uncertain period during which they might not know if their destiny would be

fulfilled or even if that destiny were worth fulfilment. Early in their teens they were taking their part in the great game of life, and historians seem to agree that their interests stimulated them, so that they retained their beauty to a greater age than do the women whose lines are not cast in strenuous places.

It is not difficult to see how large was the rôle entrusted to the capable wife of a man who played a part of any magnitude in those stirring years. She would be the mistress of a palace that was to all intents and purposes a strongly defended castle, she might even direct the capital city of a state. Beyond the walls would be an intolerable poverty and oppression, so that in times of peace her hands were full, and she could learn to direct, instruct and, if need be, repress. But peaceful times were few. War was never very far away, nor could the best intentioned owner or ruler of any large tract of country hope to keep the peace or even to ensure it. He would be called upon to take sides in some strife that touched his borders, and, did he refuse to do so, his refusal would unite two opposing factions for just such length of time as was necessary to secure his own extinction. If he were not a small chief, but a great one whose advice was sought by popes and kings, his duties would be equally onerous. The state would demand ambassadorial services. The pace of travel was less than that at which we walk along a high road, for in those days high roads were few and bad. Bridges must submit to the same criticism; robbers were abroad; provisions might fail. We read of great ladies travelling to be married in all the state the times afforded, and coming near to die of hunger, thirst, and fatigue upon the road. The commercial traveller of the twentieth century can travel farther and with more comfort in one day than the envoy of popes and emperors charged with matters of life and death could travel in a month. It will be seen, then, that the wife occupied a position of great responsibility. She could not face the trials of the road, save in very exceptional cases, nor was there anybody whom her husband could trust to look after his domains while he was away on military or diplomatic missions. So the wife of the lord exercised his functions in his absence, and Renaissance history has many a stirring story of ladies who had added to wide learning and study of the classics and philosophy, a creditable knowledge of strategy that stood them in good stead in

hours of crisis. Such things had been known of course in mediæval times and even before, but the women who conducted defences in the earlier days were of another type, little better than bloodthirsty counterparts of their bloodthirsty masters.

Education, early marriage, and a sense of responsibility that often endured throughout life, will serve between them to explain much that were else inexplicable about the Platonic movement. Ronsard could write, 'Aimer l'ésprit, Madame, c'est aimer la sottise,' and it is impossible to deny that the truly great, as distinguished from the supremely attractive, women produced by the Renaissance are few, or that the highly artificial doctrines of which so many were devout defenders stood greatly in the way of any far-reaching development. But in spite of this, there are nearly two centuries of history that receive a part of their light from the accomplishment of great women who worked under conditions that could hardly have been less encouraging than they were. Doubtless, if the records of history were ampler and more complete than they are, if chroniclers and portrait painters had thought a little more of posterity, the gallery of distinguished women would be greater than it is; while if those who were paid to blacken the characters of others had been more conscientious about accepting orders, or less witty and capable in executing them, some women—Lucrezia Borgia among the number—would not have remained for centuries the sport of an indiscriminate calumny.

Finally, in dealing generally with the women of the Renaissance before turning to the story of individual lives, it must be confessed that they have left no deeper impression than their beauty and capacity afford for the ages that were to follow them. They excite our admiration, stimulate our curiosity, summon up pictures of bygone splendour, flood their era with light, and then pass silently away to bear undying witness to the skill of the great painters for whom they sat and to the dressmakers and jewel workers who laboured unknown to fame. The women initiated no movement that has survived. Their accomplishment is that of a few brilliant individuals who played their part in the centre of civilisation's stage. They have left no mark upon Scholasticism or Humanism. Only the saints, like Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila and Joan of Arc, have succeeded in impressing the universal mind. The rest

owe what is most attractive in their record to the times in which they lived, times that have stirred men's pulse in a fashion that neither the years that follow nor those that precede the Renaissance can accomplish.

It is often said that great figures appear in the world when the times are ripe for them, but this is hardly true. History can show many records of lives that went out in darkness because they were so far in advance of their own generation, and, on the other hand, we need not travel far to find people in every walk of life who belong to the generation before last or even to one anterior to that. But notwithstanding the truth that people come before and after their proper time, there is no denying the fact that great epochs produce great personalities, and we find on turning to Renaissance history that the most brilliant women associated with the Italian Renaissance belong in point of the date of their birth to the years between 1454 and 1490. The first of these years is associated with Catherine Cornaro, Queen of Cyprus. Eight years later Catherine Sforza came into the world. In 1471 Elizabeth Gonzaga, Duchess of Urbino, was born. One year later came Bianca Maria Sforza, and following her, two years afterwards, Isabella d'Este. Beatrice d'Este was born in 1475, Lucrezia Borgia in 1480, and Vittoria Colonna in 1490. Thus the short space of thirty-six years witnessed the birth of eight ladies, each of whom has invited and rewarded the patient labours of many historians. They are all typical women of the Renaissance, but it would be outside the limited scope of this volume to deal with them all in turn. Their lives and adventures, however interesting they may be, are valuable to us just so far as they serve to explain or to set out the conditions under which they acquired their measure of fame, notoriety or obloquy. For the purpose of this chapter, which does not seek to do more than open up the whole subject for the benefit of those who care to examine it more closely, three short studies will suffice. The persons chosen as illustrative types are those two brilliant daughters of Lombardy, Isabella and Beatrice d'Este, and a great lady of Rome, Lucrezia Borgia, who, after being the butt of endless evil accusations, is at last being seen in a more favourable and truer light. These three ladies are selected because they show in their own lives how large a measure of responsibility women could assume upon occa-

sion, and how they could combine an ample measure of frivolity, extravagance, and worldliness with a high personal courage, most praiseworthy endurance, and diplomatic gifts of a high order. Of the three, Lucrezia Borgia remains a little obscure. The absence of an authentic portrait, the shame of her origin, the ugliness of her earlier life, and the persistent abuse of those who hated her because she was a sister of Cæsar Borgia and a daughter of Pope Alexander VI., helped, despite her long and honourable residence in Ferrara, to make her a little indistinct and hard to judge. But happily she was a great letter-writer, and some of those around her were generous enough to pay honest tribute in the latter days; but it will be time to pay more attention to this matter when Lucrezia Borgia's career is discussed in detail. In point of date the first of the three ladies chosen is Isabella d'Este, held by many good judges to be the most brilliant, accomplished, and successful of all the worldly women Italy produced in the season of her greatness. She was the elder daughter of Duke Ercole of Ferrara, whose wife, Leonora of Aragon, was a daughter of Ferdinand (Ferrante), King of Naples. She was highly educated, and with her sister Beatrice spent some of her early years in Naples with their grandfather. On her return to Ferrara, Battista Guarino, son of Guarino of Verona, became her tutor, and she responded in an extraordinary fashion to teaching, becoming a linguist, a patron of Arts and Letters and, in quite early years of her life, a collector. At the age of six she was betrothed to the Marquis of Mantua, who was then fourteen, and in 1490, while she was still fifteen years of age, the marriage took place. Before she was twenty her mother, Leonora of Aragon, a good and gracious woman, whom she dearly loved, was dead, but as though to balance the burden of grief she had a daughter of her own, and was beginning to take an active part in affairs of state. Isabella had developed by now many of the characteristics that one associates with the outstanding figures of the Renaissance, though always rather with men than with women. She was brilliant, tactful, full of resource, highly cultured, rapacious, a devoted follower of success, personally kind to those who failed, but quite ready as a matter of business to take advantage of their failure. She claimed to be ruled neither by hope nor fear, but believed devoutly in astrology! She was extremely tolerant, and when her brother-in-law, Lodovico (il Moro),

was dead, she received in Mantua two of his mistresses (the famous Cecilia Gallerani and Lucrezia Crivelli), and gave them the assistance of which they stood in need. She was tolerant of her husband's occasional lapses from the perfect married state, even though the temptress of the hour chanced to be one of her own maids of honour. And for all that Mantua's ruler departed from the straight and narrow way, she remained a chaste and devoted wife and a loving and ambitious mother, with a keen eye for her magnificent collection of *objets d'art*, a thought for the political condition of Mantua in relation to other states, and a keen determination to make the best of the world she lived in. She was the patron of Perugino, Gian Bellini, Leonardo, Titian, and Mantegna, and her portrait painted by Titian may be seen to-day. She built a studio and hung pictures by Mantegna and Correggio on its walls. Perugino was commissioned to paint for her a picture setting out the combat between Love and Chastity, and in a world which did not look with any special concern upon lax husbands or unfaithful wives she lived untainted by the faintest breath of scandal. It may be true after all, as so many aver, that idleness is at the root of all evil, and, if we will but grant as much, it is not difficult to find the genesis of Isabella d'Este's virtue. But more admirable even than her qualities in this regard is her exquisite and unfailing tact. When her brother, Alfonso, married Lucrezia Borgia, whose earlier husbands had been so unfortunate, she must have been profoundly disgusted and not a little fearful, but was careful to disguise her feelings in surroundings where they could not be safely expressed. Perhaps she did not give full credence to the horrible stories that emanated from the Vatican. She received Lucrezia royally, superintended the marriage festivities in Ferrara, and became a good friend of her sister-in-law.

Ten years after Isabella's marriage the great and long looked-for event of her life came to pass. It was the birth of a son, and the mother was clever enough on that occasion to ask Cæsar Borgia to stand sponsor, and so conciliate the most unscrupulous and dangerous man in all Italy. Do not let us belittle her for holding a candle to the devil in this fashion. Her times were difficult, her husband's position insecure, and she herself was a good woman, judged by all ordinary standards. There came a time when the Marquis of Mantua was compelled to go to the wars. He took part as com-

mander of the allied forces in the great but indecisive battle at Fornova, in commemoration of which Mantegna painted his famous Madonna della Vittoria, now in the Louvre. Isabella ruled in his stead, and her rule in Mantua seems to have been both wise and peaceful. It was but a first experience; there were others of like kind to come. Soon after the birth of her boy, Cæsar Borgia attacked Urbino, captured it, and drove out the duke and duchess. Now Elizabeth of Urbino, whom we know through Titian's portrait of her, was Isabella's nearest and dearest friend. She welcomed the fugitives to Mantua, but this kindly feeling did not keep her from bargaining with the conqueror of Urbino for some valuable old statuary which was among the spoils of war, and having got it, she kept it, though doubtless the Duke and Duchess of Urbino, when they saw what had been their property transferred to her collection, did not comment overmuch. After all it is not unreasonable to suppose that they had acquired this or other of their treasures by very similar means, for such was the rule and custom of the years. Isabella regarded her duties as a collector no less lightly than she regarded her duties as a friend, and the fact that the Duke and Duchess of Urbino quite understood the position she took up in the matter is shown by the betrothal of their nephew and heir to Isabella's eldest child.

Sudden developments and changes were now to come, and they found Isabella d'Este ready to make the best of them all. Alexander VI. was dead, and his successor on the papal throne was the fierce, strenuous Julius II. (della Rovere), who hated all the House of Borgia, and succeeded in reducing to impotence Cæsar Borgia himself. Isabella had presented her husband with a second son, Ercole, born in the year 1505, and the Marquis had been captured in battle by the Venetians, who kept him prisoner for thirteen months, during which time Isabella ruled Mantua once more and with complete success. In the end she was compelled to send her eldest son, Frederick, to Rome as hostage for her husband, but the lad had inherited some of his mother's gifts, he speedily became a great favourite of Pope Julius II., and was made captain-general by his successor, Pope Leo X. We must pass over the years between 1509 and 1519, when Isabella's husband, Francesco, Marquis of Mantua, died, and was succeeded by his eldest son, to whom reference has

just been made, and then the years that lead to 1527 may be passed over, for they have little of political importance to record. Isabella, now a widow, continued to live in magnificent state, ever adding to her treasures, ever seeking to advance her children and to help her friends. In the last-named year, when Rome was sacked and the full light of the Renaissance movement paled, Isabella d'Este was in the Holy City, living in the palace of the Colonna, and Clement VII. was Pope. The troops of Duke Charles of Bourbon captured and looted Rome, and Isabella escaped in a galley to Ostia, but not before she had bribed the Pope with a timely gift of forty thousand ducats to give her second son, Ercole, a cardinal's hat. No storm was sufficiently terrifying to turn the good lady's thoughts from the pursuit of her children's welfare and her own hobbies. And as soon as she got back to Mantua she started negotiations for the purchase of some of the Vatican treasures which had been carried off, and, while these business transactions were being completed, she was doing her best, in the most practical fashion, to relieve the sufferings of her city, which she found hard hit by plague and famine. When she had restored order and relieved distress and had exhausted the possibilities of the sack of Rome, she received a visit from Titian, who painted her portrait, and then she presided over the wedding festivities of Ercole, her nephew, eldest son of the Duke of Ferrara. That Ferrara was suffering badly from the plague did not avail to hinder her. In the following year her son Frederick was made Duke of Mantua, the elevation in his rank being the outcome of his mother's diplomacy, and in spite of his avowed relations with another woman she married him to Margherita Paleologa, the heiress of Monteferrato. This would seem to have put the finishing stroke to the edifice of her ambition. All was well with Isabella d'Este; time and circumstance had united to pay tribute to her desires, and no one of the great schemes upon which her heart had been set had miscarried. Nothing now remained but the delights of a peaceful life in the beautiful villa of Porto, the association with artists, poets, statesmen, and others, the company of children and grandchildren, and the priceless surroundings that unlimited means, slightly unscrupulous actions, and a perfect taste had gathered together. It was at the villa of Porto that death claimed Isabella d'Este in the year 1539, when she was sixty-five years old, and had

not one ambition left to gratify. We can hardly be surprised to hear that she was called by the chroniclers of her own time the Greatest Woman in the World!

To many students of the Renaissance Beatrice d'Este, Isabella's younger and far less fortunate sister, must make an even stronger appeal. We can understand the full extent of Isabella's genius, because she was granted an ample measure of time in which to express it; but Beatrice, after giving evidence of gifts hardly inferior to her sister's, was hurried from the world when she was but twenty-one, and the first act of the life drama had only just been played. Some historians hold that there was much mercy in this fate, since her husband's fortune, so treacherously won, had but a few years to endure. Yet who shall say that had Beatrice d'Este been by his side Lodovico might not have weathered the storms that overwhelmed him?

Beatrice was brought up at her grandfather's court in Naples, where she must have watched Lorenzo the Magnificent while he gave up long weeks to an effort, ultimately successful, to bring Ferdinand of Naples to his side. When she was but five years old she was betrothed to Lodovico Sforza, who was twenty-four years her senior and son of one of those great leaders of mercenaries whose sword was ever at the service of the highest bidder. The engagement was of course purely diplomatic. The Sforza family wanted an alliance with the strong and much more honourable house of d'Este. Isabella was already promised to the Marquis of Mantua, so Lodovico, after he had obtained the necessary consent to an alliance in principle, was referred to Beatrice as the only lady of the family who chanced to be disengaged. Five years after the betrothal the child returned to Ferrara, where, under the teaching of Guarino, she acquired some Latin, a little French, which was not enough to serve her in after life, many accomplishments, including dancing, riding and hunting, and some moral training from her exceptionally good and pious mother, Leonora of Aragon. By the time Beatrice had finished her education her future husband Lodovico was the real ruler of Milan, whose lawful duke was his nephew Gian Galeazzo. But this boy was a nonentity, lacking both brains and physique, and he left the conduct of affairs very

largely to his uncle. Lodovico was in no hurry to marry, for his mistress, Cecilia Gallerani, one of the most beautiful and accomplished women of her time, occupied all the hours he could spare from administrative duties. Political influences prevailed at last, and when Beatrice was sixteen years old the marriage was celebrated in the Visconti Chapel in Pavia under conditions of rare splendour. A triumphal entry into Milan followed, and among the wedding festivities mention may be made of a masque arranged by Leonardo da Vinci, who, by the way, had painted Cecilia Gallerani's portrait.

Lodovico treated his child-wife with every courtesy, and was undoubtedly fond of her from the beginning, though he could quite reconcile this devotion with his attention to his mistress. Happily for Beatrice d'Este, she was a woman in force of character although a child in years, and she speedily gave her astonished husband to understand that she would not share with anybody the kingdom of his affections. He was prompt to estimate the position at its proper value, and his mistress, who had just borne him a son, was soon married to one of the nobles attached to the court. In the meantime Gian Galeazzo, the real Duke of Milan, had married Isabella of Aragon, who at first was on very friendly terms with her cousin Beatrice, and gave birth to a son, who received the title of Count of Pavia. Beatrice, satisfied that she had regained her husband, devoted herself to a life of pleasure that did not lack refinement. There was much splendour of social achievement. There was an infinite capacity for shining in the light of the time, there was an inexhaustible welcome for poets, scholars, musicians, and wits. Contemporary correspondence has much to say of these years. Everything that money could buy was at the disposal of the young wife, and all went well until 1493, when she gave birth to a son, while her cousin, Isabella of Aragon, gave birth to a daughter at about the same time. It is quite clear that the coming of this heir roused to supreme activity all Lodovico's considerable capacity for intrigue. The regency of Milan was no longer sufficient for him. He regarded his nephew with supreme contempt and as an ineffective force standing in the light of his ambitions. His mood was soon divined by the Duchess Isabella, who promptly communicated her suspicions and fears to the old King of Naples, while Lodovico began about the same time to intrigue with Pope

Alexander VI. The intrigue spread, and the Treaty of Senlis, which brought Maximilian, son of Frederick III., and Charles VIII. of France into the field against the interests of Gian Galeazzo and the King of Naples, was the outcome. It is at this point that Beatrice shows for the first time her political sagacity. At the age of eighteen she went to Venice to intrigue there on her husband's behalf, and we read that she acquitted herself with distinction on her critical mission. The Emperor Frederick III. died and Maximilian succeeded him. Ferrante of Naples was next called upon to pay the inevitable penalty that time demands even from the rulers of men, and then we find Italy invaded by Charles VIII., Gian Galeazzo coming suddenly and almost inexplicably to his death, Lodovico proclaimed Duke of Milan, and the widowed Isabella in despair. We find, too, that the gods of war were favourable for a time to the troops and fortunes of the unspeakable Charles VIII., who took Florence and Siena without a blow, threatened Alexander VI. in Rome, and then proceeded to invest Naples, whence Alfonso had fled. It was only when Charles VIII. had himself crowned in Naples as king of both Sicilies that all Italy took alarm and looked, strange as it may seem to us, to Lodovico himself to set the matter right. In those days it was no uncommon sight to see the men who were fighting one another in May ranged under the same banner in June or July. It was all a matter of the convenience of the moment; political sagacity ranked higher than honour, and in a very little while the Emperor Maximilian, Pope Alexander VI., Venice and Milan were ranged against the power of France. In the following spring Lodovico was crowned in Milan, and stood for a moment on the heights of his ambition, as though the gods had granted him for some brief space the power of seeing how far he had to fall. A little later the Duke of Orleans, on behalf of France, stormed the city of Novaro, and Lodovico would appear to have lost his head (though the whole incident is not quite clear), and to have left Milan in his wife's charge. In these difficult circumstances Beatrice d'Este seems to have acquitted herself with distinction, and after the indecisive battle of Fornova, in which the allied forces were assisted and indeed directed by the Marquis of Mantua, husband of Isabella d'Este, peace negotiations were opened at Vercelli, and Beatrice took part in them. There it was decided that Lodovico's rule

should extend over Genoa and Savona, but the amount that the French were to pay to Lodovico was cancelled by consent, and the new ruler of Milan found his pockets perilously empty. Following the peace, Lodovico entered into an alliance with the Emperor Maximilian and into another alliance of less honourable kind with the famous Lucrezia Crivelli. Happily, perhaps, there was for Beatrice d'Este no long period of regrets. In January of 1497 she gave birth to a still-born son and died. She lives for us to this hour in the exquisite monument set up by her sovereign husband in the Certosa of Pavia and in the portrait so long attributed to Leonardo, but allotted by twentieth-century criticism to Ambrogio da Predis in the Ambrosiana in Milan. Time gave but the smallest chance to Beatrice d'Este, and many of the flying hours were spent in the pursuit of pleasure. But when occasion came she could respond to it in noblest fashion, and we are left wondering how far she might have travelled had she been spared to live the normal span.

Lucrezia Borgia is, in some aspects at least, comparable to an orchid growing strangely beautiful out of such ground as is commonly associated with these exotic growths. She was born to Alexander VI. in 1480 when he was Cardinal Borgia, and her mother was Vanozza Catanei, who is said to have passed under the protection of Cardinal Borgia after living for a while with the Borgia's life-long rival, della Rovere, afterwards Pope Julius II. The Catanei was also the mother of Cæsar Borgia and of the ill-starred Giovanni, Duke of Gandia, who is popularly supposed to have been murdered by the order of his brother Cæsar. But it is worth noting that Frederick Baron Corvo in his history of the House of Borgia suggests that Pope Julius II. was the real father of Cæsar, and that it was the knowledge of his paternity that paralysed Cæsar's actions when Alexander died. Mr. Corvo is so clearly the apologist of the House of Borgia, and the special pleader on its behalf, that the evidence he adduces requires to be very carefully weighed; but it is worth remembering how von Ranke, in his *Lives of the Popes*, tells us that Cæsar treated Pope Alexander with the greatest discourtesy upon occasion, and even if we are looking at the supermen of the Renaissance it is easier to believe that they would murder their half-brother than the

son of both their parents. The fact that Cæsar Borgia crosses the life of his sister at so many points must serve to justify this brief digression.

Lucrezia was splendidly educated, and before she was in her teens had mastered Greek, Italian, and French in addition to her native Spanish and 'some Latin.' She was brought up in the house of Madonna Adrianna Orsini, who in time to come was to be her maid of honour. But the years in which she lacked responsibility were few, and at an early age she was married to Giovanni Sforza of Pesaro, and lived for a while with him, her mother and another of her father's mistresses, Julia Farnese, under one roof. After a brief married life the young couple were sent for to the Vatican, and, on grounds that satisfied the canon law, divorce was brought about and Lucrezia was promptly married to the seventeen year old Alfonso, Duke of Biscaglia, by whom she had a son. But her unfortunate husband was in the way of Cæsar Borgia, who is alleged to have instructed some of his bravos to assassinate him. The duke was badly wounded, but escaped and sought refuge in the Vatican. Thereupon Cæsar Borgia is said to have remarked that what could not be done in the light of the sun could be accomplished under the light of the moon, and he himself, aided by one of his hired assassins, put an end to the unfortunate nephew of the King of Naples, who was hardly out of his teens. Pope Alexander's antagonism to the King of Naples, who had refused to give the hand of Princess Carlotta to Cæsar, would seem to account for the murder. Lucrezia's grief appears to have been real, and to have disturbed her father and brother sufficiently to compel them to send her away from the Vatican. So she travelled with a great escort to the old Castle of Nepi overlooking Mount Soracte, the Tiber Valley and the Sabine Hills, and in this retreat, amid the trappings and association of deep mourning, she remained for the greater part of a year, until the natural gaiety of her disposition had time to reassert itself, and it is well to remember in this connection the curiously mercurial temperament of the time, the familiarity with death, the uncertainty of life and the call of pleasure. After a period of mourning and the recital of many prayers, she was back in the Vatican, where her father began to negotiate for her marriage with the eldest son of the Duke of Ferrara, brother of Isabella and

Beatrice d'Este, yet another Alfonso, the mighty experimenter in gunnery. It was purely a diplomatic arrangement, intended to win over the House of Borgia, not only Ferrara, but Urbino and Mantua. The King of France was the Pope's ally in this design, and it may be remarked that Alfonso was a childless widower, whose wife, Anna Sforza, had been dead for some years, and that Lucrezia, twice married and now a widow, was but twenty-one. After a time, Duke Ercole of Ferrara realised that the whole proposition was a profitable business, and started to bargain with Pope Alexander, who would seem to have lacked none of the huckster's gifts; and in the end Ferrara got the best of the bargain, as far as the pecuniary arrangements went, for the Pope remitted the annual tribute of four hundred thousand ducats that Ferrara paid to the Church, gave the duke several towns and many benefices. The marriage was one of the most splendid and costly in the annals of the Renaissance, and, as if to acquaint the young bride with every sort of grief, she was compelled to part with her infant son Roderigo, Duke of Biscaglia, whom she never saw again.

But it was during the time when the marriage was merely under discussion that Lucrezia Borgia had the first opportunity of proving herself a true daughter of the Renaissance. In June 1501 Pope Alexander, in whose hand the sword was as familiar as the pen, being with his army, made his daughter his *locum tenens* in the Vatican —a step wholly unprecedented, and one for which no century can offer a parallel. She was empowered to open letters, receive visitors and preside at the consistory, and though doubtless the Pope wished to awaken Ferrara to a sense of his daughter's manifold capacities, it is clear that she must have been a woman of extraordinary force of character, because Alexander VI. had many enemies and, most implacable of all, that Cardinal della Rovere who was to succeed to the Triple Crown.

During the splendid ceremonies associated with the marriage, Lucrezia visited Urbino and was received twice by Isabella d'Este of Mantua, first in a town where the wedding party stayed *en route*, and then at Ferrara, where the great Ariosto delivered a poem in Lucrezia's honour, and with a fine disregard both for facts and for scandal referred to her as 'Pulcherrima virgo!'

It is well that Lucrezia now stood apart from the Vatican and

the unspeakable life there, for Pope Alexander's days were numbered, and within two years of her marriage he was dead.

In 1505 the old Duke of Ferrara died and Alfonso succeeded. Stormy years followed, for Pope Julius II. was a born fighting man, and Ferrara found himself in the wars sometimes against the Pope and sometimes against the Venetians, and, while the duke led his armies to battle, the duchess stayed at home, ruling Ferrara in his absence with judgment, firmness, skill, and a great compassion for all suffering. In times of sickness and famine she was devoted to her people. She kept up correspondence and very friendly relations with her famous sister-in-law, Isabella d'Este. She presented her husband with three sons and a daughter, and mourned the loss of her first born (Roderigo of Biscaglia), who died in 1508. As the years passed she weaned herself more and more from the pomp and extravagant ceremonial of court life, and devoted herself with ever increasing ardour to good works, establishing hospitals and houses for religious orders, providing young girls with dowries, tending the sick and feeding the hungry. In 1518 her mother, to whom she was tenderly devoted, died in the odour of sanctity. In a little while she had to condole with Isabella d'Este on the death of the Duke of Mantua, and then the time approached when she too must die—in childbirth. The devout turn of her mind is revealed by the letter she dispatched two days before her death to Pope Leo X., begging him 'to grant from his spiritual treasury' some comfort for her sorrow and his Holy Benediction. So lived and so died Lucrezia Borgia, the evil associations of whose youth were destined to overcome and blot out the memory of the countless good deeds of her maturity. One cannot tell whether it was weakness or a very subtle diplomacy that led her to bow before the imperious will of her father and brother. She might have played a more heroic part in the early days, but it is safe to suppose that it would have been a short-lived one, for at the zenith of their power neither Alexander nor Cæsar Borgia would admit obstacles to cumber their path for long.

With this brief review of three notable and interwoven lives we may leave the women of the Renaissance. Sufficient has been said to show the many-sided nature of those who stood in the van of the political and social movement, how in every path of life that

MARRIAGE OF THE VIRGIN : RAPHAEL

Pinacoteca, Milan

Photo Anderson

Note the survival of Greek ritual in the snapping of the shaft across the knee. This picture has been used to illustrate an obscure allusion in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*

they followed they were temporarily great. They could combine with complete devotion to social duties and the privileges of their order a capacity for handling questions of high politics, affairs of state, and the defence of their own domains. It gives us a curious thrill to reflect that should such a stimulus as the Renaissance gave to the fifteenth century come into the life of our own or some following century, we may look for a like efflorescence. Given heroic times, we may look for heroic personalities.

CHAPTER XX

THE SCHOOL OF FERRARA AND ARIOSTO

SECOND only in importance to Florence as a nursery of Renaissance culture, and as an original force in the intellectual life of Italy from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, is the city of Ferrara.[1] To-day the city is but a shadow of its former self, but it retains memorials of the bygone splendour. Its castle, once the scene of the glories and cruelties of the house of Este, still towers in forbidding grandeur over the town. It is a type of the Gothic stronghold, moated, the walls heavily machicolated, with frowning corner towers, the architectural expression of that despotism which the Este family wielded with uncompromising vigour. They were a rude race at bottom, almost Gargantuan in their lusts, yet capable of the most delicate refinement. If we would see the complete realisation of the Renaissance spirit we must turn to the lords of Ferrara—Niccolo III., the man of colossal passions; Lionello, half humanist, half troubadour; and the splendid Ercole, strong and unscrupulous, yet not wholly brutish, under whom the court became, as Dr. Johnson said of his old college, 'a nest of singing birds,' and the city advanced to its highest point of outward magnificence.

In the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries the house of Este had a hard struggle to retain Ferrara. The marquisate was a vicarage of the Pope, but the Holy See claimed the city as part of the legacy of the Countess Matilda, and wished to re-establish direct power over it. At the same time the Venetians coveted the place, and a fierce contest raged over it for nearly a generation. For a time the Church was successful, but at length the people recalled the Este after a bloody massacre. At length, in 1332, Pope John XXII. recognised the ruling house. For the purposes of the

[1] For the whole subject see Mr. Gardner's magnificent *Dukes and Poets in Ferrara*, to which the writers are deeply indebted.

present sketch we need not go farther back than Niccolo II., who is the first notable patron of letters at Ferrara. He entertained Petrarch, and to him Boccaccio's pupil, Benvenuto da Imola, dedicated his commentary on Dante. The Estensi lived hard, and were in all things a law unto themselves. Their mistresses were legion, their bastards more numerous than lawful sons. Seldom did a lawful son succeed to the family honours, and every time the title changed hands, disappointed scions of the race conspired against the new chieftain and paid the penalty of their attempt. All through the history of this lurid house, the headsman is constantly in request. The reigning Este knew no mercy. Even when a son was the aggressor, the ties of family affection availed nothing.

The most terrible story of Ferrara, and one which has passed into popular poetry, belongs to the reign of Niccolo III., the twelfth overlord of the dynasty. Of Niccolo there is much to say, for, under him and his son Lionello, Ferrara advanced to the first rank as a meeting-place of humanists and poets. Pius II. summed him up as 'a fat man, jolly, given up to lust.' Mr. Gardner extends the portrait, and finds Niccolo 'a curious blending of mediæval ferocity with the first germs of Renaissance culture, of apparently genuine religious feeling with the most unbridled sensuality.' This description, as we have seen again and again, is almost a 'general expression'—to use mathematical language—for the Italian despot of that age. Niccolo, like his predecessors, had a huge and promiscuous taste in concubines, yet he was also a much married man. Three times undismayed did he enter the holy bonds, despite the presence of mistresses numbering, according to a courtly magnifier of his lord, eight hundred. This first marriage was childless, his second an Aeschylean tragedy, his third remarkable in its issue, for it gave to Ferrara its great lord Ercole.

It is in the second wife, Parisina, that the terrible tragic drama of the house of Este centres. When she, a daughter of the Malatesta of Rimini, came to Ferrara as Niccolo's second wife, there were already at least five natural sons of the marquis's, youths on the threshold of manhood. Of these, Ugo, Leonello, and Borso were the children of a beautiful Swiss, Stella de l'Assascino. These three were treated in all respects as if no bar sinister crossed their escutcheon. Ugo was at home, to his own undoing and that

of his beautiful stepmother, for in the words of the old Scots' ballad:

> '. . . . Sair and mickle was the love
> That fell the twa between.'

They were betrayed to Niccolo, whose vengeance was swift and terrible. Ugo and Parisina were seized and, after less than twenty-four hours' imprisonment, beheaded. At the same time the thorough-going marquis ordered the execution of several other noble Ferrarese ladies who were known to be equally guilty, but he was content in the end with one more fair head.

Such was the rule of the Master of Ferrara. But at the same time he was not all brute. Into his fierce soul shone some rays of the new dawn that was spreading over Italy. The Studio, or university, which had been founded in 1264 was reorganised by Niccolo. He had himself been well schooled by Donato degli Albanzani, who translated for his use some of Petrarch's and Boccaccio's Latin works. He wished his son Leonello to have the best tutor in the new learning that Italy could produce. Leonello was now recognised as heir to the title, and already made progress in his studies. He was keenly alive to the new movement, and knew where to look for an eminent professor. He named the great Guarino of Verona, and Niccolo took his son's advice. The appointment was of the first importance, for Guarino made Ferrara one of the most celebrated classical schools of Italy in the fifteenth century. As a centre of Greek learning it was unsurpassed even by Florence. All the eager spirits of Europe flocked to Guarino's lectures. How important his teaching was for England will be seen in a later chapter. Before, however, the Veronese accepted the Chair of Eloquence and of Greek and Latin letters at Ferrara he devoted seven years to the exclusive instruction of Leonello, who became a most exquisite scholar. The young prince is one of the most amiable figures of his time. We know him from Giovanni Oriolo's portrait, a profile of singular nobility. The features, save the nose, fall short of canonical; they do not harmonise, the forehead, though high, is too receding, but is saved by its great indication of the organ of memory, the upper lip is too long, the lower sensual and a little irresolute, but the chin is firm and finely moulded.

The whole effect is of intellect, with something of mystery, and just a suggestion of decadence, but the eye is clear and steadfast, the eye of a poet. The hair, short on the forehead, falls clustering backwards in a great curling wave, half hiding an ear that betrays the criminality and cruelty of the house of Este. But the poise of the head is infinitely graceful, the neck superb, the bearing that of an athlete and perfect man-at-arms.

Before he was perfected in scholarship, Leonello had mastered all manly exercise. He gave the fairest promise of becoming a prince who would give to Ferrara a lustre outshining that of his father. More and more he made the court a home of letters and art; the rough old marquis endeared himself to the savants and collected a good library. The Council of Ferrara still further increased the throng of churchmen and scholars. Thither came John Paleologus and the Pope Eugenius IV. We see Aurispa, who had already taught another son of Niccolo's there; we meet that universally learned member of the Florentine Academy, Leo Battista Alberti, poet, scholar, man of science, artist, architect, whose versatility is less famous only because it was eclipsed by that of Leonardo da Vinci. The young Leonello made the Pope a Latin oration. There was a feast to visiting Greeks and Humanists, ending in an academical discussion, when the Platonists contended with the Aristotelians. It was not carried on in every case from pure conviction, for Ugo Berzi, the leading physician of his time, offered to defend any part the Greeks thought fit to oppose. He silenced the Greeks.

Leonello succeeded his father as marquis in 1441. He was preferred by Niccolo's will to his legitimate brother Ercole. This time the change was accompanied by no conspiracies or executions. The new marquis put scholarship and literature before all other concerns. Daily his affection for Guarino increased. Pupil and master, in their new relations of patron and protégé, worked together and corresponded as comrades rather than as prince and retainer. Without actually forming an academy, the intellectual circle of the Ferrarese court followed the academical tradition. Such glimpses of their life as have been preserved to us are fitting parallels to the Camaldolese disputations. They walk, they rest under the great laurel in the garden, they ride under the stars on a warm summer

night, anon they meet in Leonello's own room 'to drive down the sun in converse.' They do not escape one defect of their persuasion, a careless disregard, amounting almost to contempt, of the Italian vernacular poets. The collection of Greek and Latin manuscripts was a first concern with Leonello. His hero was Julius Cæsar. But later he modified his classical fanaticism, and even tried his hand at the Italian sonnet. He loved music, church services, painting and plastic art. Pisanello, painter and medallist, was of his most intimate circle. To Leonello we owe Alberti's great work on architecture. He laboured for the advancement of the university, to which he brought the Greek, Theodore Gaza, to teach Homer and Sophocles. Brilliant as the circle was in its vitality, it contained no great genius. Tito Vespasiano Strozzi was the one considerable poet of Leonello's literary court, but he did not develop fully during the prince's too short lifetime. Guarino and Aurispa were certainly great teachers, Gaza did much to extend Humanism in Italy, but the full glory of Ferrara as a nursery of genius was to come, and when it arose its expression was Italian, a curious revenge of time on a coterie that exalted the ancient tongues at the expense of the vernacular. Leonello's peaceful reign, in the course of which he showed himself capable in politics, came to an end in 1450. His people regretted him, for if he was not all that has been claimed, even the least favourable estimate of his character makes him out a virtuous prince. He alone of the Este had no blood on his hands.

He was succeeded by his brother Borso, who obtained the principate by the acclamation of the citizens, and if innocent of polite letters, was a far greater figure in Italian politics than the gentle Leonello. His strong and genial personality brought him into favour with the Emperor Frederick, whom he entertained magnificently when he came to Italy for his coronation, and whom he persuaded to grant him the title of duke. Borso was a master of pageantry; he loved display, and knew how to organise it to useful purposes of state. His policy was pacific, he aimed at making Ferrara, as it were, an arbitration ground for all Italy. In 1459 he entertained Æneas Sylvius, Pope Pius II., magnificently, but the visit did not improve their relations. Pius has described the duke as a bluff and hasty man, lavish, a mighty hunter, jocund, and worshipped by his people as a god. He had all his father's decisive

way with offenders; the official executioner enjoyed no sinecure in his time, but Borso was not cruel. His disposition is said to have been simple as a child's, his private life free from scandal. As for culture at his court, he had no Latin. There is a serio-comic epistle on this head from Carlo da San Giorgio, who tells the duke quite frankly of his deficiency, which has led Carlo to turn a little book of his own into Italian for his dear lord's delight, but in the end Borso's classical shortcomings were good for native Italian letters. The court favoured romances in the French style, and amused itself with the Carlovingian and Arthurian epics. Here was the germ of the poetry that remains the supreme glory of Ferrara.

Meanwhile the university flourished under Borso's wise and generous patronage. He did more for it than the dilettante Leonello, for his genius was above all practical. Guarino continued in his professorship till he reached the age of ninety, and was succeeded by his son Battista. Among the eminent names at the studio of Borso's reign was Lascaris, who afterwards brought Greek to France, and Pier Candido Decembrio. Native literature received an impetus in the public lectureship on Dante. Strozzi translated Petrarch's *De Vita Solitaria*. Niccolo da Correggio and Strozzi sang Borso's praises in Latin verse. Boiardo produced his Latin eclogues and his Italian lyrics. The Ferrarese school of art, which influenced Raphael and Correggio, flourished under Borso's patronage, although it was a direct outcome of Leonello's influence. The principal painters of the school are Cosimo Tessa and Francesco del Cossa. One of the Este house, Baldassare, Borso's half-brother, was both painter and medallist.

The culmination of Borso's career was his triumphant entry into Rome to receive from the Pope the title of 'Duke of Ferrara' in his own right. At the same time the Holy Father presented him with the golden rose. He returned home only to lie down on his death-bed. His half-brother Ercole seized the opportunity to secure his own succession, and was opposed by his nephew Niccolo, Leonello's son. Civil strife made civil hands unclean in the streets of Ferrara. Borso rallied for a moment and the strife was stilled, but in a month's time the duke departed this life, and Ercole seized the throne.

The new duke played a greater part in the conflicts and intrigues

of Italy than any of his predecessors. His wars with Venice and Milan, his alternate enmities and friendships with the papacy, lie outside the intention of the present sketch, which is chiefly concerned with the growth of intellectual life at Ferrara. Ercole was not essentially a man of war. He desired above all things to live at peace with his neighbours and to keep Ferrara neutral. He had the hereditary passion for magnificence, and desired only to adorn his capital and to enjoy the recreations of a prince. His extravagance occasionally irritated the citizens, and led to popular tumults. One of his tax-gatherers, Zampante, who had carried oppression to an unbearable pitch, and was nevertheless honoured and protected by his master, was killed by two students and a converted Jew. The assassins rode through the streets, crying 'Come out, we have slain Zampante!' They were pursued, but escaped. The poetasters of that tuneful city improved the joyful occasion in a torrent of satirical odes and sonnets.[1] But the general tendency of Ercole's rule was to foster the gentler things of life. The court became a type of that freer civilisation which the new ideas were bringing to fruition. Freedom found a new meaning in the Ferrarese treatment of women. Ercole's daughters—Isabella, Beatrice, and Lucrezia—were the applause, delight, and wonder of their age. Beatrice, afterwards Duchess of Milan, and Isabella, Marchesa of Mantua, were trained in the new learning; they had the education of boys, they were keen in field-sports as any man of their race, they possessed the family passion for poetry, art, and splendour. And to it all they added a grace and delicate femininity that has made them among the best-loved figures of the time. The liberty they enjoyed was extended to all the women of Ferrarese society. They were pioneers of the best sort of 'feminism.'

Ercole, as man of pleasure, exercised a very remarkable influence upon the development of the Italian drama. Hitherto dramatic art in Italy had been chiefly of a sacred character. The duke bethought him of the possibility of a classical revival. Accordingly in 1486 he had the Menaechini of Plautus magnificently staged in the courtyard of the palace. The revival had an immediate success. Next year Niccolo da Correggio's *Favola di Cefalo*, a duller imitation of Politian's *Orfeo*, was given, and just a twelvemonth to a

[1] Burckhardt, I. chap. v.

day after the first performance, Plautus's *Amphitruo* was presented, with musical interludes and wonderful effects of lighting. Boiardo's *Timone* was next produced, and the new departure was popularised by the admission of citizens to these entertainments. The novelty and magnificence of the spectacle made a profound impression on the audience. They listened, we are told, in silence, and at the close burst into tumultuous applause. The attendance sometimes numbered ten thousand.

Such were the first beginnings of the secular Italian drama. In those years Ferrara saw nearly all the plays of Plautus and Terence, sometimes in Latin, sometimes in translation. Humanism found a new use, and the innovation made for sound scholarship, for the duke took especial care to see that the Italian versions should be accurate.

Mention has been made of the court fashion for the Arthurian and Carlovingian romances. The cult had memorable effects in the development of the two epic poets who are the chief glory of Ercole's circle. One of them, Matteo Maria Boiardo, would have been sufficiently remarkable in himself, but he is now remembered chiefly in connection with his successor Ludovico Ariosto, who is the last word in the poetry of the Renaissance. The links in the chain of the native Italian poetry in its ultimate evoluton are three—the cult of the romances, the Orlando Inamorato of Boiardo, and its more famous sequel, the Orlando Furioso of Ariosto.

Boiardo was born in 1434 at Scandiano, a village at the foot of the Lombard Apennines. He studied at Ferrara, married the daughter of the Count of Novellara, and lived for the most part at the court of Borso and Ercole. He served the latter on various diplomatic missions, a task that few men of letters could evade in that age, and he acted also as governor of Modena and Reggio, two of the Este dependencies. Boiardo's theories of statesmanship were in advance of his time. His rule was mild, and he was one of the earliest opponents of capital punishment, which he would not have inflicted even for murder. He did some work in classical translation, and, as we have seen, experimented in Latin verse. He translated Nepos and Apuleius, but his genius was romantic; he turned to the mediæval legendary epics for the material in which he was to find his characteristic expression. He chose the Carlovingian style, and produced a rhymed romance, hardly to be called

an epic proper, in which, with a wealth of fantastic imagery and incident, he fused the spirit of chivalry with that of the Renaissance. He introduces the Paladins of Charlemagne, whom he leads through a succession of adventures. They set out from Paris and visit Spain, Hungary, Africa, and the Orient. The hero, Orlando, is the Roland of that old *chanson de geste* which Taillefer chanted on the eve of the battle of Hastings, as he passed before the Norman ranks, flinging his sword into the air and catching it again as it fell. Orlando is in love with an eastern princess and sorceress, Angelica. The poem is a mosaic of amorous dalliance, knightly adventure, magic, mystery, monsters, strange portents, and stranger scenes. Novelle in rhyme, tales in the Boccaccian manner, appear as interludes to the main theme. It had a huge contemporary popularity, passing through sixteen editions between its first publication 1486 and 1545, but it afterwards fell into unmerited neglect, partly owing to the greater fame of Ariosto, partly because it was written in a somewhat rough and provincial style which the wits of the later Renaissance could not approve. It was left unfinished at the poet's death in 1494. Of its early success we have a striking proof in the fact that when the earlier books had appeared Isabella d'Este gave the poet no rest until he had sent her the continuation, and she held serious debates with Galeazzo Visconti on the relative merits of Orlando and his foil Rinaldo, who was her favourite. The enthusiastic lady put the poor poet to considerable trouble by her urgency. He had by him only a rough draft of what she had already seen. Isabella would have that, then, for a second reading. He could not let it out of his hand, but he promised a fair copy, within six days, by mounted messenger. It was no light task to be the honoured poet of those ladies of Este.

Amusement and amusement alone is Boiardo's purpose. The times allowed him as much licence as he cared to introduce, and he was not sparing with that. He had little or no sense of character, but as a story-teller he excels. Serious intention there is none, philosophy undreamed of. It is a fantastic pageant for courtly triflers, picturesque, charming and flattering, for it contains allegorical references glorifying the heroes of the Estensian house. The well-patronised poet of the day had always to pay his shot in that direction.

Before considering Ariosto, we ought to mention in passing a minor imitator of Boiardo, also a dependent of Ercole's court. This was Francesco Bello, the blind poet, who wrote a romance called the Mambriano. Its characteristics resemble those of the Orlando; the principal heroes are the same, novelle are introduced as in Boiardo, but the work is of little importance.

The grand builder upon Boiardo's foundations, who put his material to an original use, was a scion of the noble house of the Ariosti. Ludovico Ariosto was born at Reggio in 1474. In his eleventh year he was brought to Ferrara, destined like sō many other poets for the law. But jurisprudence was not to his mind. He decided early to be a poet, and had his way. He was one of Ercole's actors in Plautine comedies. At first he was bitten by Humanism, and studied eagerly under Gregory of Spoleto. He found friends in the Strozzi and Cardinal Bembo. His first verses were Italian, but for a considerable time he wrote in Latin. He celebrated Lucrezia Borgia, now the wife of Alfonso d'Este, heir to the dukedom. Of Lucrezia's place and influence at Ferrara brief account has been given in the chapter on the women of the Renaissance. At Ercole's death in 1505, Ariosto, who had served for a year (1502-1503) as captain of Carona, had returned to Ferrara in the suite of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este. He was ready to find himself and to proceed with the composition of his masterpiece, Orlando Furioso. He had already tried a poem in *terza rima* in praise of the house of Este, but he left it unfinished, conscious, perhaps, of an all too manifest failure.

Symonds puts his finger on the spot when he accounts for Ariosto's choice of romance by the decadence of the finer spirit of the earlier Renaissance. We are now in a period of decline: Humanism was dying or dead. The humanists were 'the victims of an unbridled subjectivity.'[1] They had become a byword, they 'offered abundant and terrible materials which satire had but to make use of.'[2] And with society at large a similar decay was at work. 'The passions and convictions,' Symonds remarks, 'that give force to patriotism, to religion, to morality, were extinct in Italy, nor was Ariosto an exception to the general temper of his age.' Yet some spiritual motive was necessary to the heroic style. That, in Italy of the opening sixteenth century, was sadly to seek. Nothing remained

[1] Burckhardt, I. chap. ii. [2] *Ibid. infra.*

to Ariosto but his supreme artistry and the sense of beauty. In form he found an end, in Boiardo's unfinished poem he found his material, vigorous, somewhat rough in places, but temptingly bizarre. Ariosto had not the loftiness of the supreme poet, he could not be perfectly simple like Homer, who is the poet of a nation's early vigour, while the Italian is of an age already touched with decrepitude. He is an idealist like Boiardo, but a realist painting his times in an allegory, tinged everywhere with a gentle irony. He imagines Orlando mad and absent from the strife between the Paladins of Charlemagne and the Saracen. But this is not the main theme of the poem, which turns upon the loves of Ruggiero and Bradamante. His purpose, however, was to paint the world of chivalry, not as Cervantes painted it, in mockery, but as a lovely dream that the world had all but lost. The charm of his pictures lies in their being kept always one remove from actual vision; like one of his own enchanters, he casts a delicate veil of mist between us and the actors in his fantasy, he catches us up from earth, as though upon wings of his fable, and carries us we know not whither. It is sufficient that Ariosto's world is always wonderful. Antres vast and deserts idle, delightful groves and streams, company that is now charming, now terrifying, creatures grotesque, beautiful and impossible, make up the warp and woof of his inimitable web.

It is a creation of sheer joy. As he worked, Ariosto was caught up into the seventh heaven of his own imaginings. It enchanted even its creator. They tell us that in the sheer delight of his poem he walked, dreaming of it, all the way from Carpi to Ferrara, unconscious that he was still wearing his slippers. That preoccupation is only understood when we remember what even the best roads were like in those days. All the exquisite arabesque of Renaissance thought; not its vigour, not its finer rapture for the grandeur of ancient Rome, the statuesque and serene poetry of Greece, but its joy in the minute and fantastically beautiful creation, is gathered up in this supreme romance. It is the negation of nature and of philosophy. In Ariosto the Renaissance puts forth a strange and lovely blossom and so fades.

He was fortunate in the opportunity of his writings. Cardinal Ippolito gave him abundant leisure; his surroundings were all that he required. The greatest days of the Estensian Court were over,

but under the Duchess Lucrezia, the daughter of Alexander VI., it was the home of all elegant levities and an elaborate pageantry entirely in accord with the poet's temperament. We read of masks, dramatic eclogues, comedies, and dances. The cardinal's tumblers showed their tricks, the air was full of hymns and the murmur of lutes tuned to the praise of the 'Divine Borgia.' On occasion Messer Ludovico Ariosto, the cardinal's *famigliare*, would turn from his epic composition to provide a comedy 'in the form of a merry jape,' which a correspondent of Isabella's calls 'from beginning to end as elegant and delightful as any other I have ever seen played,' adding 'it was much commended on every side.' That was the first of his comedies, the 'Cassaria.' His second, the 'Suppositi,' was performed at Rome, with Raphael's scenery, before Leo X., who sat, eyeglass in hand, laughing at the 'merry japes,' many of them carrying a *double entendre*, to the grave scandal of the foreign ambassadors. Ariosto wrote about half a dozen comedies. One of the most delightful, left unfinished, but completed by his brother, is the *Scolastica*, a genial picture of student life in Ferrara. Although Gabrielle finished it, the hand is that of the master, the manner of his best. It is a close approximation to the modern method; the poet has escaped from classical tradition into his own world. Those who would see the Ferrarese student as he was in the early sixteenth century will find him to the life in this play.

Ariosto remained in Ferrara till his death, which occurred in 1533. He was a popular idol, a man of very handsome presence and most gracious and amiable manners. His townsfolk buried him in the church of San Benedetto, and gave him a splendid monument, which, however, he scarcely needed. He had already raised that for himself in his poetic epitome of the things that sweetened life, were life itself, to the men and women of the later Renaissance.

CHAPTER XXI

THE RENAISSANCE IN GERMANY

THE whole movement of the revival of learning in Italy covered a period of two centuries. In Germany it lasted for just fifty years. Like the Italian movement it had its precursors and its breakers of the ground, upon whose obscure work later and more brilliant intellects, quickened by direct contact with Italy, founded their own achievements. If the movement, however, was briefer, it never attained to the same breadth as it had done in Italy, nor did it ever, except in one or two great leaders, divorce itself so completely from mediævalism. The schools of the monks and the town schools of Germany had shown certain signs of quickening and a spirit of greater inquiry before the full influence of Italy was felt. But their work was always marked by caution; the earlier Humanists had still the fear of the Church before their eyes. If they broke away from monkish Latinity, and groped after some approximation of classical style, if they even allowed themselves to be attracted for a time by the pagan beauties of the ancient literature, they did it unfortunately with a bad conscience. They strove to justify themselves with lame and inappropriate excuses, some of them even expiated their fancied lapse from grace by ending their days in religious retirement and meditation. In this misgiving we can trace that religious characteristic which was present in the German Renaissance to the very end. The religious impulse indeed conquered the Humanistic, and that is why the word Renaissance, as far as Germany and the Netherlands are concerned, is more usually spelt Reformation.

Among the great teachers of that earlier time the most famous names are those of Rudolph Agricola, Jacob Wimpheling, and Alexander Hegius of Deventer. The two first were pioneers in the better organisation of primary schools. Hegius is among the apostles of the secondary school. It was the pupils of these men,

and in particular the most famous pupil of Rudolph Agricola, Erasmus himself, who passed beyond the conservatism of their masters, and permitted themselves the benefits of free-thought. None of the Germans, however, became, like some of the Italians, utter pagans, caring indeed for the elegant graces of polite learning, but beyond that, believing in nothing except the indulgence of the senses. The most advanced of the Germans, Reuchlin, the typical savant, and Erasmus, the man of letters, remained, for all their philosophical freedom, sincere sons of the Church. Not for them was the spirit of Lorenzo Valla, of the Neapolitan academy, who when summoned before a Board of Inquisitors to answer for his blatant scepticism replied airily: 'I believe as Mother Church believes. It is true she knows nothing, but what she believes, I believe.' Therewith he marched out of court, went to his patron, Alfonso the Magnanimous, and complained bitterly of 'those pestilent Inquisitors.' Alfonso told the officers of the Inquisition that his secretary was to be left alone, and no more was heard of the matter. There is nothing in all the record of the leading German Humanists to parallel the scepticism of Valla, the shameless ribaldry of Beccadelli, or the notoriously evil life of Poggio, Filelfo, and Politian. They are, those German Humanists, grave and earnest men, intent upon the welfare of the next generation.

The close of the fifteenth century was marked in Germany by an extraordinary enthusiasm for education. On all hands new universities were springing up. Prague, founded in 1348, had within a few years of its foundation no fewer than ten thousand students on the roll. Vienna was founded in 1365, Heidelberg 1385, Cologne 1388, Erfurt 1392, Leipzig 1409, Rostock 1409, Grieswald 1456, Freibourg 1460, Basle 1460, Ingolstadt 1462, Mainz 1476, Tübingen 1476, Wittenberg 1502, and Frankfort-on-the-Oder 1506. The roads were thronged with travelling scholars, who moved along the great trade-routes, and it is noteworthy that most of the universities sprang up at commercial centres: for the municipalities and the richer burghers, bitten by the prevailing spirit, founded endowments for the maintenance of poor scholars. The princely houses were not behind. Here, however, we may note the curious contrast with Italy. The work of Humanism, as we have seen, was fostered in the country of its birth, not so much by the universities

as by individual princes, who drew about them gatherings of learned men. The Italian universities were, first and foremost, practical. They were schools of professional equipment. Bologna stood for law, Salerno for medicine, Padua for theology. For the pursuit of merely polite letters they were not greatly concerned. There was, one might say, no Faculty of Arts, but in Germany, although she never rose to such a pitch of culture, the universities did become the nurseries of polite learning, although at Cologne, where the Dominicans were in great power, the classical revival found little favour. Erfurt, on the other hand, became a vital centre of Humanistic culture. The study of poetry and of the elegancies of Latin prose for their own sake led to the discontinuance of the old arid scholastic disputations. It also turned the younger men's minds more and more towards educational work, and so sent out a body of more liberally equipped teachers. It must not be supposed that these men, as a general rule, paralleled in their accomplishment that of Italian students who had followed the same course, but it was a better thing than the crabbed obscurantism of the monastic school. A demand arose for better text-books and for intelligent grammar, and with the demand came the supply.

The chief centres of this activity in Germany and the Netherlands were Deventer, Munster, and Schlettstadt. As to the princely patrons of learning, we have three great names—Albert of Mainz, Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony, and Eberhardt of Wurtemberg. In the Imperial house the most noteworthy names are those of Frederick III. and Maximilian I. Frederick had little learning, but he did not view the new movement with disfavour, and gave it what help he could out of a depleted treasury; with Maximilian it was far otherwise. This Emperor was an accomplished Humanist, who loved to draw about him poets and scholars. One recalls the glimpse of him in Longfellow's *Nuremberg*, in lines which echo the Emperor's attitude towards poetry and the attitude of poets towards the Emperor. There he shows us, in the oriel window at Nuremberg,

> 'The poet Melchior singing
> Kaiser Maximilian's praise.'

The Emperor himself made some excursions into poetry, or rather into fiction, but he had no time for finished work. What he

left was rather material to be elaborated by his secretaries than actual performance. He laid the foundations, however, of German historical research, and he was assiduous in his care of the university of Vienna. At Vienna Latin poetry was cultivated with greater understanding than at any other German university, and the leader of the school was the best stylist of his day, Conrad Celtes, an imitator of Ovid. Under Maximilian the university went so far as actually to establish a Faculty of Poetry, and in imitation of the ancient Italian custom, the laurel crown was awarded to deserving bards. The Elector Frederick of Saxony, surnamed 'The Wise,' is a man of whose personality we know very little. He had the gift of silence, which was accounted to him for wisdom. Whatever his own accomplishments might have been, he was at any rate a good friend to letters, and his foundation of the university of Wittenberg was indirectly the most momentous act of the period. For to the new school Frederick brought as professor of Rhetoric his friend Martin Luther, and it is to his association with the Little Monk that Frederick owes his place in history, which, very probably, his abilities did not warrant. At the same time the work of Luther, while of overwhelming importance in the spiritual history of Europe, was nevertheless the death-blow of German Humanism. Humanism in its best sense flourished at Mainz under Albert of Brandenburg, who was at once archbishop, cardinal, and elector. His circle was unrivalled for its talent and brilliancy, and the cause of the new learning was reinforced by the fact that Mainz had become the chief seat of German printing. It is to the establishment of the printing press, indeed, that we must attribute the quick spread of the movement throughout Germany. Of the printing press and its influence a more particular account is given in another place. It may here merely be noted as the factor which made the Teutonic revival of learning move more quickly than the Italian, for in Italy the dissemination of literature had for the greater part of the Humanistic period depended upon the efforts of the copyist.

Mainz enjoyed especial advantages as a centre of Humanism. The town was situated upon a grand stage-route. It was itself the last stage on the way to the great Fair of Frankfort. It was in close touch with Cologne and with Heidelberg, and by means of the Rhine it communicated with the German seaboard.

A further consideration, and one that affords another parallel with Italy, was the upgrowth of informal coteries of literary men. The two principal of these were the Sodalitas Rhenana and the Sodalitas Danubiana. The Danubiana had its seat at Vienna, the Rhenana had no such concentration, but had its branches at Augsburg, Nuremberg, Worms, and Heidelberg. These societies were less pretentious than the similar bodies in Italy. They never arrogated to themselves the proud title of Academy, and their objects were less magnificent. Florence strove to restore Platonic philosophy; Rome, Roman antiquity; and Naples aimed at perfection in literary composition. The learned Germans assembled around a hospitable board, and enlivening their conversation with German beer or generous Rhenish, were concerned only with the general dissemination of what Erasmus called 'good learning.'

The luxury of Italy and its sensuous æsthetic had no place in German Humanism, but it was a solid, a kindly, and a far-reaching movement, that would have produced some distinctive flower of Teutonic culture had not theological controversy turned it aside. Reuchlin remains the student in excelsis; Erasmus with his steel-bright intellect, his wit and culture, is yet something cold for the Teuton. Is it too fanciful to suppose that the true possibilities of the German Renaissance slumbered till the close of the eighteenth century? The passion and the sentiment of the German nation ought, in contact with the spirit of Italy and the spirit of Greece and Rome, to have produced something more intensely typical than any of the students of that age; but is it not possible to see the whole question summed up and expressed in Goethe? There we have a German of the Germans who is yet a Greek, a philosopher, a poet, a historian, a mystic, a pagan, naked and not ashamed. And yet, for all his paganism, the essentially religious nature of the German triumphs ultimately in her greatest poet. The Verneinender Geist—the denying spirit that is Mephistopheles—yields at length to a triumphant optimism in the second part of Faust. In the serene close of the drama that occupied Goethe almost to the last moment of his life, we catch the afterglow of the Renaissance.

Before turning to consider the greatest figure of the German Renaissance, with the exception of Erasmus, who stands in a somewhat different category, we may glance for a moment at

the life of one or two of the comparatively minor figures, who were none the less of high importance in their day. One of these was Jacob Wimpheling, who was born in 1450 at Schlettstadt, and who was a prominent member of the Heidelberg branch of the Sodalitas Rhenana, of which John von Dalberg, Bishop of Worms and Chancellor of the University, was the head. Wimpheling was educated at the universities of Freibourg, Erfurt, and Heidelberg, and in the last-named place he served for a time as a teacher. Although Wimpheling had a smaller name in the public mouth than the great leaders of German thought at that time, he is still remembered as a leading educator of Germany. His works, which are for the most part educational, were composed chiefly at Strasbourg. Of these two the *Isidoneus* and the *Adolescentia* were intended as guides to the German youth in liberal studies. The *Agatharchia* was a book for the direction of princes, and was also in its main intention designed to promote the cause of higher education. His *Germania* was an appeal to the municipality of Strasbourg to establish secondary schools. At the same time he appealed to German patriotism by vindicating the supposition that Alsace had always been German territory. He was opposed by Thomas Murner, another eminent Humanist, who flourished between 1475 and 1537. Incidentally the collision of these two writers upon the Alsace question developed into one of the most famous literary controversies of the time, but this is a side issue into which we need not enter here.

As a writer Wimpheling enjoyed great popularity, and he had also the satisfaction of seeing his views put into practice. His hand, indeed, is clearly traceable through the succeeding three centuries of German education. He belonged to that earlier school of which mention was made at the beginning of this chapter, that is to say, in selecting classical works for his pupils to study he was careful to avoid anything that might have the least anti-Christian tendency. Whatsoever seemed to him consonant with the homely virtues of the German race, or whatsoever seemed to make for practical utility in daily life, he included in his canon of studies. With him the highest accomplishment in learning was a secondary thing to the promotion of high moral character in his pupils. He was, however, quite capable of admiring excellence in mere scholarship. In a passage in his *Isidoneus*, he showed how hearty was his

admiration for the most eminent of his contemporaries. His words are worth quoting, as they focus the expert opinion of many of the great scholars whose names have already been mentioned in this connection. He begins with a modest estimate of his own knowledge of Greek. He seems to have had but few opportunities and no really good teacher in his youth, but at the time when he is writing he lets us see that the state of things in Germany is now very different.

'If I wished,' says Wimpheling, 'to follow the example of Marcus Cato, and learn Greek in my mature years, there would be no lack of excellent teachers in Germany. Thus Rudolph Agricola has learned and taught Greek. Johannes Camerarius von Dalberg, Bishop of Worms, devotes himself with ardour to the study of Greek. This man who is the ornament of Germany, the glory of his generation, the especial pride of Duke Philip of Bavaria, the Crown of Bishops, I regard, on account of his astonishing energy, as born for something even more distinguished. With no slight ardour does Johannes Triphemius, Sponheim's pious Abbot, devote himself to the study of Greek. Among those who at the present time are competent to teach it are also Johannes Capnion, or, as he is commonly called, Reuchlin of Pforzheim, and the poet-laureate, Conrad Celtes. It is, moreover, well known that Augustine in his second book of Christian doctrine advances the opinion that for those who speak Latin a knowledge of Greek is necessary for the understanding of Holy Writ. It is also known that teachers out of their ignorance of this tongue have communicated much error to their pupils.' With all this reverence for Greek, Wimpheling, however, regards Latin as the noblest of tongues. It can be learned and understood by the people of every nation, it makes the nobly-born still nobler. 'He who knows it not makes himself thereby unworthy of the Roman Imperial crown. . . . He who refuses to become a Latinist remains for ever a wild beast and a two-legged donkey.'

For the choice of books he refers the reader of the *Adolescentia* to St. Basil, and the letter of Pope Pius II. to King Ladislas of Bohemia, of which mention has been made in an earlier chapter. After that he would place his own word of advice. He recommends Cicero, Sallust, Seneca, Tranquillus, and Valerius Maximus. If his pupils would like something more sprightly to cheer them up or amuse them, he would have them turn to Lucian, a choice which proves,

by the way, that Herr Wimpheling was after all fairly broad-minded. Of the imitators of Latin who had arisen within the New Age, he cordially recommends the founder and master of the company. 'Whenever any sad mischance has shaken you,' he writes, 'take your flight to Francesco Petrarca, who, for all the turns of fortune, be they good or ill, has ever a perfect remedy, and in tasteful form.' [1]

It is significant of the opinion which the men of the later Renaissance held of Petrarch to find his Latinity thus recommended by a Latinist of Wimpheling's eminence. Wimpheling, it is interesting to note, has a word for the present day, more apt than any of his counsels concerning classical study. There is not the slightest fear of these receiving over much attention, but there is another branch of exercise, not entirely intellectual, which, while wholly admirable in itself, threatens to be just a little overdone. As to sports, which he summarises under the generic term of the 'Chase,' he finds that proficiency in this is not in its essence a princely accomplishment. 'The worst gallows-bird, empty of all ability, of all cleverness, of all fear of the Lord, is qualified to apply himself to this delight. He too may carry the horn which hangs about his neck, he too may jump about like mad, and race his horse here and there through field and forest, and fill the air with cries. He too, in peril of life and health, may follow the game, and shoot it with bow or gun, or run it down with a hunting spear.' Wimpheling, in posing the other side of the question, shows himself entirely destitute of democratic feeling. The words read strangely to-day, when the proletariat will confess to no bar to its own advantages and progress. Wimpheling continues: 'For a prince, however, that would be a more laudable art, in which a man of common birth and low intelligence could not equal him.' He goes on to expound the craft of the diplomatist, the proper medium of which is Latin.

Granted his premises, Wimpheling is right for his own day, and there is a sense in which he is right for all times, for however the democrats may rage, and the aspiring proletariat imagine a vain thing, it is indisputable that the traditions of a ruling class produce a temper and a talent for administering the affairs of nations which cannot be acquired by the merely able man of no tradition at

[1] De Remedio Utriusque Fortunæ.

all. Wimpheling was a severe moralist. When he passes from questions of learning to questions of conduct, he becomes austere. 'A young man should never smell of wine, if he desires to be accounted wise.' He wags his head and prophesies that those who spend their days in debauchery will assuredly end in the poorhouse. He will not even permit young men to curl their hair, a rule that would have told hardly upon Petrarch, had he lived in time to come under the influence of the excellent Wimpheling. The master knows no compromise, however, and ends this part of the subject with these terrible words: 'Finally, crimping the hair shuts one out from the Kingdom of Heaven.'

Rudolph Agricola now claims a passing notice. His real name was Rudolph Hausmann, which in its sense of husbandry was easily Latinised into Agricola. He was born near Gröningen in 1443, of fairly well-to-do parents. He went to school at Gröningen, and then proceeded to Erfurt, where he took his bachelor's degree. Thereafter he went to Löwen in Brabant for mathematics and philosophy. His great natural refinement led him to seek the society of Frenchmen, and to avoid the more roistering lives of the Dutch and German students. Having graduated as master at Löwen, he went to Cologne for theology. Against his own inclinations, but in order to humour his family, he went to Pavia, to take up the study of law, but jurisprudence had small attractions for him, and he gradually became more and more absorbed in classical literature. At Pavia he met Johannes von Dalberg, with whom he became very intimate, and this friendship lasted throughout the whole of Agricola's life. The desire to perfect himself in Greek sent him to Ferrara to the famous Studio of Ercole d'Este, in which Guarino of Verona was at that time the leading professor. He was welcome at the court of Ercole, not so much on account of his learning as that his excellent voice and admirable skill in music made him an acquisition to the services of the ducal chapel. He stayed six or seven years at Ferrara, and then returned to Holland, making his headquarters at Gröningen. When Dalberg became Bishop of Worms, he sent Agricola an urgent invitation to come to him at Heidelberg. Agricola accepted, and at Heidelberg turned his attention chiefly to the study of Hebrew, with a view to making a translation of the Old Testament.

That was in 1484. In the following year Dalberg and Agricola

went to Rome together. He returned to Heidelberg only to die in the arms of his friend and patron, the bishop. Agricola's chief literary work was *De Inventione Dialectica*, which he began during his residence in Ferrara, and finished in Germany in 1479. He was a voluminous correspondent. He made several translations of classical authors, and his minor works include a biography of Petrarch, for whom he had a great admiration. Agricola stands in rather sharp contrast to the prevailing type of German Humanist. He was what might be called Italianate. Profoundly attached to the arts, especially of music and painting, he found himself entirely out of sympathy with the coarser pleasures of his countrymen. He had a delicate and sensitive spirit that declares itself in the turn of his writings. While he was orthodox, he was enamoured of what has been called in later days a passion to apprehend the absolute. There is a fine spirituality in many of his passages. 'There are,' he says, 'other things, a knowledge of which serves rather to adorn the spirit, and the exploration of which must be regarded rather as a noble pleasure than as a necessary condition of existence. Here belong the investigations into the essence of things.' On this he bases a defence of scientific inquiry, which he finds is in itself ennobling. He commends all intellectual exercises, and he is not insensible to their practical utility. But above all he places philosophy. He is, however, when all is said and done, the typical German Humanist in his orthodox Christianity. While recommending the works of the philosophers, he is careful to add that by reading them you arrive at the contemplation of the Scriptures, because you must arrange your life in accordance with their injunctions; to the Bible you must trust as to a certain guide in matters of the soul's salvation. All that which is furnished from other sources is more or less mixed with error. This is the saving clause of the school; seldom or ever is it absent from the writings or the teachings of those German Humanists. It is part and parcel of their theological bias, which was afterwards to wreck the whole movement as far as pure culture was concerned. The process at work in the German intellect of this time started from theological criticism and proceeded to solid studies in the three learned languages —Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. It attracted scholars, and it attracted, as we have seen, patrons of wealth and position, who were not neces-

sarily aristocrats, but it laid no hold upon the nation at large until Pfefferkorn's attack on Reuchlin, which prepared the way for the Reformation. After the year 1518, German Humanism was absorbed in politico-religious warfare. The beginnings of that struggle are closely bound up with the history of German Humanism, and with the life and work of its leading master, the man who was the savant par excellence of his time and of his country, Johannes Reuchlin, otherwise known as Capnion. Hitherto we have had desultory glimpses of this most interesting character. The time has now come to speak of him in detail, and of his relations not only to the Renaissance but to the Reformation.

Johannes Reuchlin first saw the light in 1455 at Pforzheim. His parents were people of some consideration, his father being bailiff of the Dominican Convent. He received his early education in his native town, where there was an excellent Grammar School, and in May 1470 he entered the university of Freibourg, which had been founded fourteen years before by the Archduke Albert. At Freibourg he made great progress in Latin, and this brought him under the notice of the Margrave Charles I. of Baden-Durlach, in whose household he had already found a place as court chorister. Appointed travelling companion to the Margrave's third son Frederick, the future Bishop of Utrecht, Reuchlin went with his charge to Paris, where he came under the influence of Johann von Stein, whose Latin name is Johannes à Lapide. Von Stein was now rector of the university of Paris. His position in learning was that of a link between the old school and the new. He was one of the last of the mediævalists, but one who kept an open mind and a favourite disposition towards newer methods. It was at Paris that Reuchlin began Greek, and there he made the acquaintance of Rudolph Agricola. From Paris he proceeded to Basle in order to pursue his Greek studies under Andronicus Contoblakas, with whom he made so much progress that he could very soon write a letter in Greek.

He was now about twenty years old, and beginning to think of independent literary work. His first effort was a Latin Dictionary, if his *Vocabularius Brevilinguus* may be dignified with the name of Dictionary. It was an ambitious project, as it professed to embrace the whole scope of the Latin language, and did not confine itself merely to the vocabulary of the Vulgate, as was the case with

existing Lexicons. Its etymologies are peculiar, but no more surprising than the attempts at philology which characterised the Lexicons of those days. From Basle he went to Paris, and worked further at Greek under George Hermonimus, who taught him to write a beautiful Greek cursive by means of which he added greatly to his income. He was now called upon to choose a profession, and applied himself to civil law at Orleans. After he had graduated, he taught law there for a short time, and then went to Tübingen, where Eberhardt the Bearded, Count of Wurtemberg, had just founded a university. Eberhardt was one of the princes already mentioned, who rendered signal service to the cause of education in Germany. Not learned himself, he was fond of the society of learned men. He drew about him a distinguished court, and made it his business to attract men of eminence to the chairs of his new university. Eberhardt, on making the acquaintance of Reuchlin, employed him first as secretary and interpreter, and took him with him to Rome, where he put the crown to his Hellenic studies by a course under Argyropoulos. He already brought with him, however, an admirable accomplishment in Greek, and surprised as well as nettled his master by flinging off extempore an admirable translation of a particularly hard passage of Thucydides. It was upon that occasion, in words that betrayed more pique than praise, that Argyropoulos traced to the bitter exile of Byzantine scholars in the West, the flight of Greek study into the Transalpine wilderness. Reuchlin, returning to Germany, fixed his residence at Stuttgart, where, still under the patronage of Eberhardt, he entered upon a career of public distinction.

For a time he combined the life of the scholar with that of the public official. He was the assessor of the supreme court, and proctor of the Dominican Order for the whole of Germany. These were only a few of the public offices which he discharged with fidelity and success. In 1492 he was sent to Italy with Eberhardt's son Ludwig, and at this time he adopted the Grecised form of his name Capnion, which had been suggested by the Venetian scholar Barbarus. His correspondents henceforth addressed him as Capnion, though he himself preferred his rougher German patronymic. During this visit to Italy he made an acquaintance that was memorable in determining a certain trend of his studies, for here, in the person

of Pico, he encountered a friend who was to turn his thoughts towards Oriental literature, and thence to precipitate the most exciting incident of Reuchlin's career. An official mission undertaken on his return from Italy brought him to Lintz, where he pursued his studies in Hebrew, under the learned Jew, Jacob van Jehiel Loans. With him Reuchlin formed a lasting friendship. He speaks of him with deep affection and reverence in his *Rudimenta Hebraica*, and adds in Latin the Hebrew benediction for the departed, 'May the mercy of the Lord lighten upon them.' [1]

With great rapidity Reuchlin made himself master of Hebrew, and he immediately began to apply his new knowledge to those more mystical studies to which he had been directed by Pico della Mirandola. He shared Pico's enthusiasm for the Cabbala, and set himself to explore the treasures which he and his friends believed it to contain. We may pass over a stormy incident and slight interruption of his official preferment, which followed upon the death of Eberhardt, and come to the point where Reuchlin became the storm-centre of the years immediately preceding the Reformation. His Oriental studies had aroused in him a sympathy, rare at that time, with persecuted Jewry. He desired that that despised people, the outcasts of European cities, should come into the 'true light of Christianity,' and he even offered to instruct and maintain any Jew who should come as an inquirer. About this time there appeared one Pfefferkorn, who had already no need for Reuchlin's ministrations. He was a convert, who had set himself to the task of proselytising his co-religionists. He began to write controversial treatises, the first of which was *Judenspiegel* or the *Jews' Mirror*, in which he proposed that the Jews should be debarred from money-lending, that they should be compelled to hear Christian sermons (no novelty this, as witness Browning's *Holy Cross Day*), and that they should be deprived of their sacred books. He was supported by the Dominicans of Cologne, through whom he obtained access to Princess Kunegunde, sister of the Emperor Maximilian. She in turn passed Pfefferkorn on to her brother, who gave him a mandate requiring the Jews in Germany to deliver up Hebrew books for destruction. Pfefferkorn now sought the aid of Reuchlin, who mistrusted him and would have nothing to do with the burning of the

[1] See Lilly, *Renaissance Types*, p. 157.

books. The proselytiser descended on Frankfort, where his campaign brought him into trouble with the Archbishop of Mainz, who proposed that Pfefferkorn should have the co-operation of other Hebrew scholars. Reuchlin's name was mentioned by Pfefferkorn. The archbishop named another convert, Victor of Karben, and a new mandate was sought from the Emperor to confirm this committee.

Other members were subsequently added, including Hochstraten, the Inquisitor of Cologne, and members of the universities of Mainz, Cologne, Erfurt, and Heidelberg. The committee never met, but the universities submitted opinions. It is unnecessary to go into these, further than to say that they were conflicting. Cologne, for example, would have suppressed only the Talmud. Mainz was for the whole seizure. The really important deliverance upon the entire question was that of Reuchlin. As an accomplished Orientalist, he was naturally averse from the destruction of any Hebrew text, and he therefore drew a strict distinction between works that were libels on Christianity and those which were not. Knowing the Talmud only from hearsay, he believes that it is difficult of interpretation, or even superstitious, but this he considers no reason for its destruction. The more inept the Talmud might be, the more ready he thought Christians should be in answering it. About the Cabbala he is in no doubt whatever. Has he not the authority of Sixtus IV. and of Pico della Mirandola that its teaching can be made to subserve the cause of Christianity? With the Jews' service books he would not meddle. It would be as absurd, he thinks, to interfere with Hebrew literature on the grounds of its anti-Christian tendencies as it would to destroy the literature of Greece and Rome for the same reason—nay more, the literature of Greece and Rome is manifestly hostile, but it is endured and even cherished. Finally he remarks that the destruction of Jewish literature, as savouring of persecution, would promote only the growth of the Hebrew religion. He is all for winning over the Jews by gentle means, and, expanding his original offer of private instruction for inquirers, he proposes that Hebrew chairs be established in the universities.

Reuchlin's opinion is creditable to his brain and heart. It is a pity that he should in a later deliverance have qualified his former view in certain respects. Had it merely gone to the Archbishop of Mainz, as was intended, no harm might have befallen. But

Pfefferkorn got hold of it, and was not altogether pleased, because of a certain passage in which Reuchlin referred to him, Pfefferkorn, as an ass. He immediately brought out another pamphlet, the *Handspiegel* this time, in which he brought puerile charges of ignorance and corruption against Reuchlin, whom he represented as the paid agent of the Jews. It is a pity that this great scholar and excellent man did not treat the *Handspiegel* with the silent contempt it deserved, but unfortunately he let irritation get the better of prudence, and the public, which at that time enjoyed nothing better than this sort of cock-fighting, was very soon delighted with another pamphlet, the *Augenspiegel*, in which Reuchlin proceeded to demolish Pfefferkorn. His annoyance has utterly destroyed the good man's sense of humour, for he solemnly enumerates Pfefferkorn's lies, of which he finds that there are no less than thirty-four.

Pfefferkorn is summed up as a scoundrel void of honour, but the most unfortunate part of the whole production is its departure from the fine liberality of Reuchlin's original position. He may have had some private fears, in those days when Inquisitors were busy, that the breadth of his view might be attributed to lurking heresy. Accordingly he says that now he is certainly in favour of burning any Hebrew book that is distinctly tainted with heretical doctrines. Further than this, he would even condemn Jewish apologetics, which he had originally defended. As to the Jews' ignorance of Christ's Divinity, on which he had formerly held an open view, he now returns to a strictly Catholic opinion. 'I hold and believe firmly,' he said, 'that their ignorance is sinful and that it cannot in the least excuse them from mortal sin, and that they shall indeed thereby be damned to all eternity.' But even this did not satisfy Cologne. The Inquisitors required him to recall the edition as far as possible, and to make a formal recantation of certain views to which they took exception, even in the hedging phrases of the *Augenspiegel*. He replied in a German tract, and declared that he would push his vindication to the bitter end. But now Pfefferkorn fired another squib, the *Brandspiegel*. The Fire-Glass took after its name, and its abusive personalities made Reuchlin a very angry man indeed. He tried a little name-calling on his own account, and did not stop with Pfefferkorn, but launched out at the whole inquisitorial body of Cologne. His defence against Colognese

calumniators is an entirely regrettable incident in what the Scotch divines would call Reuchlin's 'Life, Literature, and Doctrine.'

Sir Thomas More, it is true, found that the provocation justified the violence of the language, but even Erasmus, who could do something himself in the same line, told Reuchlin frankly that while he sympathised with his injuries, he had touched the limits of vituperation. The upshot was that Cologne condemned, with the Emperor's sanction, both the defence and the attack. Reuchlin himself was summoned by the Inquisitor to appear at Mainz, but here his old knowledge of jurisprudence stood him in good stead. Twice he discovered a legal flaw in the proceedings, and had them quashed. The Archbishop of Mainz would not permit the *Augenspiegel* to be burnt, but this useless piece of theatricality, so dear to the controversialists of the time, was finally accomplished at Cologne. This was the beginning of a stormy period in Reuchlin's life. The calm of his studious pursuits was now for eight years interrupted by the long fight between him and the Inquisitor Hochstraten. It was here that the controversy upon a question in its beginnings purely anti-Semitic becomes involved on the one hand with the Renaissance pure and simple as a revival of learning, and on the other with the Reformation. Naturally the appearance of two such protagonists as Reuchlin and Hochstraten divided Germany into two camps, nor was the interest in the duel confined to Germany. Throughout Europe the sympathies of the new Humanists rallied to Reuchlin. At home and in the Netherlands he had Erasmus and Budæus. In Italy he had Cardinal Grimani and Egidius of Viterbo, in England Thomas More and Fisher. His party called themselves Capnionphili. With Reuchlin's enemies were the decadent and ignorant clergy and monastic orders. Very soon all question of the peril of the Hebrew scriptures was forgotten in another issue. Reuchlin stood for learning and for the intellectual advancement of the world. Against him was arrayed the reactionary forces of an effete theology. We know from Erasmus's *Encomium Moriae* exactly what the best kind of Humanist thought of the contemporary Churchman. It seemed therefore an atrocious scandal that this degenerate Church should be able to prosecute a man who stood for what a later thinker was one day to define as the 'really excellent.' The Reuchlin-Pfefferkorn controversy had, in a word,

brought the Humanists into a critical attitude towards the Church.

That attitude was significant of what was to follow. Reuchlin appealed to Leo X. To Giovanni Medici these northern wranglings must have seemed exceeding foolish. He dealt with the appeal characteristically—that is to say, he remitted it to a committee, and acted entirely on their report. One of the Commission was George Tcherkness, Reuchlin's friend. The judgment of the Holy See was that Hochstraten had exceeded his powers, that the *Augenspiegel* was unheretical, that both parties should henceforth hold their peace, that Hochstraten should pay the costs of the appeal. Hochstraten in turn appealed to Rome against this decision, and the further proceedings evoked for Reuchlin a very large measure of sympathy. This expression of feeling took a remarkable form, and added to the literature of the Renaissance and the Reformation one of its greatest curiosities—*The Epistles of Famous Men to John Reuchlin*. This drew forth an even more remarkable collection of letters, and one that holds a high place in the literature of satire. The *Epistles of Famous Men* were followed at the interval of about a year by the first series of the *Epistles of Obscure Men*. These droll parodies were not, however, aimed at the *Epistles of Famous Men* —they were complementary to that work, and while pretending to proceed from the enemies of Reuchlin, really held those worthies up to ridicule. Seldom has satire gone home more successfully, for at first the persons caricatured took the production seriously as a bold stroke from their own side. Their anguish and mortification when they discovered the truth may be imagined.

The authorship has been hotly discussed, but it is now pretty well ascertained that the leading spirit among those wits was the young knight Ulrich von Hutten, a delightful person, very much the man of the world, not concerned overmuch about religion, but very intelligent, and if he was enthusiastic about the matter at all, keen that the cause of intellect should have such support as he could give it. But it is impossible to avoid the suspicion that, first and foremost, to talk in very homely language, Ulrich von Hutten was out for a lark, and it was the diversion of the thing that appealed to him beyond every other consideration. The book acted as medicine to Erasmus, for his hearty laughter over it dispelled a tumour that

was threatening his life, but for all that he did not approve; he thought that once more the limits of controversy had been overpassed. It is not known what the Pope thought of it personally, but Leo X. was not the man to miss the point of the *jeu d'ésprit*. Officially, however, he was bound to condemn it by a Bull that reads as comically as the work condemned. It is characterised as a work of certain sons of iniquity, having no fear of God or man before their eyes, and impelled by wicked, damnable, and temerarious loquacity. An attempt on the part of Reuchlin's friends to secure peace for him by threats of the sword might have ended successfully. His persecutors gave way, but before their decision could be communicated to Rome, Leo had pronounced a final condemnation of Reuchlin and all his works. At the same time, such was the wonderful inconsistency of that wonderful age, Leo himself superintended the passage through the Roman press of an edition of the Talmud, the first ever printed. The Bull was an empty victory for the Dominicans, whose advantage ended with the mere pronouncement of the Pope's judgment. But the eight years of controversy had left their mark upon Reuchlin, and the continual legal proceedings had greatly diminished his means. He had long before resigned all his public appointments, and wished only to end his days in peaceful study.

Fortunately during the few years which still remained to him, he was at least allowed this satisfaction—no further proceedings were taken, and he remained to the end a student, and, despite the usage he had received at her hands, a loyal son of the Church. He was invited to become professor of Greek and Hebrew at Ingolstadt, where he spent a delightful year, and attracted great crowds of students. Driven from Ingolstadt by the plague, he accepted a professorship at Tübingen, but the work was too much for him. He was now sixty-five, and the last three years had told heavily upon him. He went in 1522 to the baths of Liebenzell, where he died on the 30th of June.

Although involved in quasi-theological controversy, Reuchlin stands clear from the earlier German Humanists, who were first of all theologians and men of learning afterwards, but with him, in spite of all his controversial work, the theologian was of secondary importance. It is as the man who cared primarily for learning for its own sake that Reuchlin takes his place in the German Renaissance.

Erasmus, it is true, had a similar spirit, but he was first of all a Dutchman and then the great cosmopolitan character of the movement. It is difficult indeed to assign Erasmus to any country—he was the foremost citizen of the Republic of Letters—but Reuchlin, despite many defects in his achievement, led the way in that spirit of patient devotion, of earnest inquiry, that love of thoroughness which mark in particular the German savant of to-day. And not the German savant only. He has set the type which has since prevailed for the rest of the world. He adumbrated, if he did not actually define, what we know as the modern scientific method. Shortly after his death, the Humanistic movement proper was lost in the Reformation. But if Humanism, as a corporate entity, was no longer visible in Germany, the work of Reuchlin had influenced thousands of individual scholars, through whose labours, and that of their successors, Germany has to-day arrived at that pitch of accomplishment which marks her out among the nations of Europe. Her men of learning are distinguished above all by their power of specialisation. It is only the German who can seize upon a minute field of knowledge, and work upon it until its true magnitude is apparent. It was fortunate perhaps for the cause of German learning that the Renaissance impinged upon the Reformation, and losing itself as a popular movement, found its expression in the work of the individual student. It was so in fact with Reuchlin himself. He stood for a time in the forefront of the Humanistic League, if one may so style it. He was overwhelmed in theological controversy, and, saving himself as by fire, returned to the quiet labours of the study and the lecture-room, touching during these two last years of his life, more fully than he had ever done, the youth and the imagination of the German nation. And it is there that we trace the true legacy of John Reuchlin.

Overshadowed by the overwhelming personality of Luther, but none the less his greatest colleague in the work of reformation, was Philip Melanchthon, who, to a greater extent than his leader, was a son of the Renaissance. Melanchthon, or Schwartzerd, was the son of an armourer of Bretten in Baden, where he was born in 1497. His mother was a niece of Reuchlin, and that greatest of the German Humanists took a most lively interest in young Philip's education. He was trained first at Pforzheim, under the schoolmasters Johannes

Hungarus and George Semlin, and in 1509 he proceeded to Heidelberg, where he took the degree of Bachelor of Arts. Later he went on to Tübingen, where he took his Master's degree. A Doctorate he would never accept, and the only further academic distinction which he cared to have conferred on him was the Baccalaureate of Divinity, which he afterwards received from Wittenberg. With Wittenberg his fortunes were very closely bound up, and his appointment to the Chair of Greek in that city was an epoch-making event in the history of the German universities. From that day the Elector's new seat of learning bade farewell to scholasticism, and under Melanchthon the New Humanism was established. We catch a curious echo of the lingering antagonism of the orthodox in the explanation which Melanchthon thought it necessary to give of his position. First and foremost, the university was the training ground for the Church, and it was natural that who held by the older methods should detect unfitness in the new enthusiasm for pagan literature. But Melanchthon in his Treatise on the reforming of the education of youth, boldly declared that, like Solomon of old, he would seek Tyrian brass and gems for the adornment of the Lord's Temple.

In his passionate devotion to the classics, his exquisite Greek scholarship, Melanchthon closely resembles Erasmus. He is like him also in the delicacy of his mind and manners, but he had little or none of that sub-acidity which makes the great Rotterdammer so pungent in his wittier deliverances. The gentle spirit of Melanchthon exercised a profound influence on Luther, and very often restrained the violence of his great leader. The son of the Mansfeld miner, for all his breadth and humanity, had always to fight with a certain coarseness of nature, but this coarseness was in an extraordinary degree qualified and restrained by the admirable temper and moderation of Philip Melanchthon. Luther was attracted, not only by the man, but by his learning. From Melanchthon he received a new impulse in the study of Greek, and this reacted most beneficially upon the great task to which Luther had by this time set his hand—the translation of the Scriptures. On the other hand Melanchthon, although a loyal son of the ancient Church, was gradually attracted towards the reformed doctrine. At the time of the famous disputation of Leipzic, when Luther encountered Dr. Eck in the wordy duel that had no result, Melanchthon, who had aided Luther on certain points

of scholarship, was sharply rebuked by his opponent: 'Hold your peace, Philip, and don't disturb me with your studious concerns.' In 1520 Melanchthon married Catherine Krapp, and gave the Reformation its first domestic centre. Later, when Luther married Catherine von Bora, these two Wittenberg households were the most interesting foci of the great movement. Melanchthon's progress towards full acceptance of the reformed doctrine was gradual but complete, and at last circumstances threw him for a time into the forefront of the battle. During Luther's captivity in the Wartburg the actual leadership devolved upon Melanchthon, and finally, when it became necessary to formulate the new theological position, it was Melanchthon's skill and learning that threw the new doctrines into shape. To him was entrusted the drafting of the Augsburg Confession. But apart from all theological considerations, Melanchthon remained the enthusiastic humanist and educationist. He gave to German youth Greek and Latin Grammars that became standard works, and if he was less fertile as an editor than Erasmus, it was only because he was more closely engaged in theological controversy. Some ten years before the Augsburg Confession he had already given proof of his skill as a draftsman of Church standards, and his *Commonplaces of Theology* mark the first step towards anything like a formulation of the reformed teaching. For a moment, during the Marburg Conference, which stands almost midway between the publication of his *Commonplaces* and the Augsburg Confession, Melanchthon permitted himself to be carried away by the prevailing stream of acrimonious controversy. At Marburg he was pitted against Oecolampadius, as Luther had for his opponent Zwingli, and for a time the calm and clear counsels of Melanchthon are marred by personal denunciation. But it was as a moderator that he did his best work, and the passing cloud of Marburg cannot in any way detract from the fine humanity and toleration that marked Melanchthon's career. He survived his great leader, and when he died in 1560 he was laid beside him in the Castle Church of Wartburg.

In Luther we have the reformer who was barely a humanist, or a humanist only in so far as classical learning would subserve the cause of theology. In Erasmus we have the humanist first, the theologian and controversialist afterwards, but in Melanchthon we find an enthusiastic theologian who was at the same time an equally

enthusiastic humanist. He is in fact *the* humanist of the Reformation. In him the two streams of the Renaissance and Reformation run parallel, and with a current of equal intensity. Alone he would never have been a reformer, but with the driving power of Luther's rugged and tremendous personality behind him, Melanchthon so adapted his peculiar gifts to the cause that he becomes the second greatest figure of the German Reformation.

A minor figure, but one not to be lost sight of, is Ulrich von Hutten, whom we have already spoken of in connection with the *Letters of Obscure Men*. Von Hutten, who came of knightly Franconian family, was born in 1484 at the Castle of Steckelberg. Being small and delicate and unfitted for knightly exercises, he was destined for the Church, but this the young man's lurking scepticism prevented. Instead of taking orders he gave himself up to literature. His youth was turbulent and disorderly, he was a free-lance of the intellect, who approximated in his manner of thought more to the witty young Florentines of the period than the heavier and beer-drenched young nobility of Germany. At last, however, Von Hutten, in an intellectual sense, ranged himself. That which gave purpose to his life was strangely enough the cause of the Reformation. He was not religious even in a formal sense. Of piety we may without offence say he knew nothing, but he saw the inherent rightness and justice of the Reformers' position, into which he flung himself with all the lively ardour of his nature. Hutten saw the humbug of John Tetzel and of the Vatican. It is as the knightly champion of anti-humbug that he flashes his gallant and gracious way through the pages of Reformation history. He had also a political motive; he thought he saw in the new movement the promise of a united Germany, in which the Emperor, supported by the free knights, would sweep away all territorial barriers to the imperial power, and would also rid the land of the Italian yoke. Hutten was a valuable ally to the cause of the earlier Reformation, but certain critics have held, not without justice, that it was well he did not live to see its ultimate development. In a purely doctrinal campaign he would have been out of place, he would not have understood it, he might even have fallen out of sympathy with his colleagues, but there can be no doubt that the presence of a light skirmisher, amid such heavy warriors

as Luther and his immediate following, was of infinite service to the cause.

We have already touched upon the *Letters of Obscure Men*, in which Von Hutten certainly had a large hand, but he was also an independent satirist, bold, fearless, and even at times delightfully whimsical. His Renaissance culture stood him in good stead. He could play with Mythologies, and wrest them amusingly to the purposes of his airy ridicule. In his *Inspicientes* or *The Onlookers*, he imagines Sol traversing the heavens in the company of his young son Phaeton. The greater light has just finished the uphill journey towards noon, and now as he begins his leisurely descent, he discusses at ease with Phaeton the manners and customs of Germany, over which his chariot happens to be passing at the moment. Beneath him lies Augsburg, where the Diet has just been holding its sitting, and to which Cajetan, the Legate of Pope Leo X., has been sent from Rome for the purpose of adjusting a trifling little controversy that has broken out in Wittenberg between certain theologians. *En passant*, Sol remarks with pain upon the habitual drunkenness of the Germans. He continues: 'This fault was inborn in them, as deceit with the Italians, thievery with the Spaniards, pride with the French, and other vices with other people.' Phaeton, a very liberal-minded young man, says if the Germans must have a vice he would rather that it were drunkenness, which he piously hopes time will amend. Suddenly they espy Cajetan, who seems to be angry with the orb of day, and to be shouting at him. In a delightful burlesque Von Hutten imagines the Pope's Legate so filled with pride that he thinks he can actually command the sun. He thinks that at his merest suggestion, not to speak of his command, the sun should shine clearer and brighter than he has been doing. The sun rebukes the cardinal for his impertinence, and together they get up a very pretty wrangle, in which nearly every word of Cajetan's reacts with biting sarcasm upon the papacy. Finally Cajetan, with evidently a reminiscence of the first book of the Iliad and mindful of the identity of the sun with Apollo, commands the greater light that he 'shall shoot pestilence and sudden death among the Germans, in order that many benefices and spiritual fiefs may be conveyed in them, that pensions may accrue, and money flow to Rome, and that

something of all this spoil shall be Cajetan's, for,' he adds pathetically, 'it is a long time since clerics have been dying frequently enough in Germany.' But the prelate reckons without his host. Sol and Phaeton show themselves exceedingly just persons. They rebuke Cajetan for a bad shepherd who would murder his sheep instead of feeding them. Phaeton utters a veiled warning of a day of reckoning for Rome when the German people call accounts, and Cajetan in a final burst of indignation and futility, solemnly excommunicates the sun. To this Phaeton retorts: 'The devil fly away with thee,' and Sol, contemptuously turning from his reviler to the business in hand, remarks that it is time to drive his car down the slope and make way for the Evening Star.

It was an age of satire. The Press, in the first glow of its new power, was kept busy supplying a public that had discovered the pleasure of reading current literature, and in those controversial times it was not unnatural that the most popular books should have been satirical. The first great early successes were Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*, and the anonymous *Letters of Obscure Men*. Equally popular, not only in Germany but throughout Europe, was a rival burlesque called the *Ship of Fools*, the work of Sebastian Brandt. Brandt was a native of Strasburg. His period was 1458-1521. He studied at Basel, where he taught civil and canon law, returning thereafter to Strasburg, where he held the municipal offices. He was also employed as ambassador to Ghent by Charles v. His chief work, the *Narrenschiff* or *Ship of Fools*, was published first as Basel in 1494. It was translated into many languages. Alexander Barclay, the Scotch poet, produced a version of it that is, however, but little better than a pale reflection. It is mere random satire at the faults and failings of every class of society, very amusing in its way, but quite without serious intention. Incidentally, the clergy come in for some ridicule with the rest of mankind, but Brandt was in no way influenced by a reforming hostility to the Church. He lived and died a staunch Catholic.

It was at this time that there arose in Germany a curious literary movement that stands in a sense apart from the Renaissance. This was the work of the Master-singers, who found their best expression in Nuremberg, under the cobbler poet, Hans Sachs. That mere burghers should have been so interested in music and poetry as to

form the Master-singers' Guild, may possibly be due in a great measure to the general intellectual awakening of the nation, but there is little of the spirit of the *artes liberales* in the Meistergesang of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. The Master-singers were indirectly the successors of the more romantic and more truly poetical Minnesingers, who had flourished from the twelfth to the beginning of the fourteenth century. These Minnesingers, or Singers of Love, in particular the love of women, were the Troubadours of the Teutonic race. They went from castle to castle, singing their chivalrous lays, and meeting periodically for contests. The semblance of one of these encounters has been preserved for us by Wagner in the second act of Tannhäuser. The most famous of the Minnesingers were Walter von der Vogelweide and Wolfram van Eschenbach. The songs of these Troubadours, although they had to follow certain laws, remain fresh and exalted expressions of passion, more often than not of Platonic passion. Master-song was very different.

When the knightly classes ceased to care about the art of the Minnesingers—for it must be remembered that the knights themselves practised it—German popular song would have fallen into decay had it not been taken in charge by the townsfolk. They, with their guilds of Master-singers, formed a society even more close than that of the Minnesingers, and they weighted their art with a multitude of laws, known as Tablatur, which governed all their compositions and finally crushed out all spontaneity. Master-song, however, produced one really great figure, that of Hans Sachs, who was less hide-bound than his contemporaries. It is well not to confuse the historical Hans Sachs with the Sachs of Wagner's imagination—the latter is a true child of the Renaissance—for Wagner exhibits Sachs as in direct revolt against the scholasticism of his fellow-masters. But for his time and station Sachs was a liberal and enlightened man.

Born in 1494 in Nuremberg, he had an excellent education at the Latin School, from which he carried away that knowledge of ancient stories and enthusiasm for the lore of the ancient world which colours all his work. He was apprenticed in 1509, and two years later went out upon his *wanderjahr*, residing at Munich, Osnabrück, Leipzic, and Lübeck, and many other German towns, where he plied his craft. He lived till 1576, and kept up his literary

activities until his seventy-ninth year. He wrote no less than seventeen hundred tales and fables in verse, and two hundred and eight so-called dramas, of which his *Shrove-tide Interludes* are the best. His works were contained in thirty-four manuscript volumes, but he himself prepared for the press and published a selection of his pieces in three great folio volumes. Sachs had the most intense admiration for Luther, whom he celebrated in the song *Thou Nightingale of Wittenberg*. With the exception of Sachs, however, Meistergesang is hardly significant in the development of German popular poetry. Its pedantries and puerilities denied it any real life, and its principal productions—those intended for the trials of the song school—were not intended to be written down. The guilds lingered on through the seventeenth to the eighteenth century, and the last was extinguished only at the beginning of the nineteenth.

Although we cannot connect the Master-singers too closely with the German Renaissance, for as far as pure poetry is concerned they are infinitely inferior, alike in inspiration and in production, to the purely mediæval Minnesingers, they at any rate bear witness to a quickening of intellect among the commercial classes which can be due only to the great new educational movement which we have already traced in the account of Wimpheling. With all its defects the Master-singer movement testified to a stirring of the artistic consciousness of the nation at large, and there was something of a finer joy of life in the festivals of these worthy burghers, who had, despite their limitations, constituted themselves the custodians of art. Sachs may not have been in revolt against his fellow-masters' pedantries, as Wagner makes him out to have been, but the Wagnerian picture of the Master-singer generally is, in its finer as well as in its grosser touches, in no way untrue to the time. There is a spirit of broad humanity and intelligence in the character of Sachs as he is presented both in history and in fiction that is admirably typical of the enlightened German burgher of his day, and the joy, simple but intense, which these commercial Minnesingers took in their open-air musical festivals, at which they crowned the victor, has in it some breath of those more refined and passionate festivals that delighted the subtler intellects of Renaissance Florence. Germany, though torn by war, civil and

ecclesiastic, took time even in a distracted age to be genial and musical, and making all due allowance for dramatic fiction, we of the present day need seek no finer realisation of that aspect of Renaissance Germany than we find in the incomparable 'Mastersingers' of Richard Wagner.

CHAPTER XXII

ERASMUS

GREAT as was the achievement of Italy in the moulding of the scholarly mind of Europe, it was not given to her to produce the very finest flower of Renaissance culture. Strangely enough, it was reserved for the genius of the Teutonic race to perfect that achievement. When a great Greco-Italian teacher, speaking of the progress of his pupil, John Reuchlin, more melodiously called, after the quaint habit of his time, Capnion, exclaimed, half regretfully, 'Now has scholarship flown beyond the Alps!' he had probably some latent vision that the work of Italy was well-nigh accomplished. The day of Italy was declining—that of Northern Europe was at hand. Reuchlin, carrying what he had learned into Germany, began to inspire a new and younger generation with an enthusiasm as glowing as Italy's, but less happily objective. The brooding mind of the Teuton, with its inveterate theological bias, was to wrest the new learning to new purposes, and to give a bias to the awakening European mind that was to carry it far from the mere pursuit of ancient learning as an end in itself. By a strange accident the Renaissance took to itself a character that was to produce the Reformation, and finally, with disastrous results, that reversion to an effete order of things which has been called, for want of better name, the Counter-Reformation.

It was not, however, directly through Reuchlin that the greatest man of letters of the early modern world was to receive the legacy of Italy.. About the same time as Capnion studied at Rome, Rudolph Agricola had also made the journey into Italy, and had brought back with him the treasures of Greek and Roman scholarship. To his school at Deventer there came in 1476 a little boy of nine, the son of Gerhardt Praet and Margaret Brandt, a curious, lively, delicate child, who applied himself to his work with such ability and brilliancy that Agricola prophesied his future greatness. He

had already been at school at Gouda, and was afterwards sent to Utrecht to the Cathedral Choir School, but he had no voice, and accordingly he was removed to Deventer, which was one of the best elementary educational centres of the time.

The schoolboy of those days led a hard life, of which the best picture has been left to us by Thomas Platter, a Swiss, who from his early childhood was a wandering scholar. We are too apt to imagine that such a career had something of romance and of pleasant vagrancy in pursuit of divine learning. No doubt it had its charms, but these are more than counterbalanced by the attendant squalor and misery. They had no continuing city, those tramps of erudition. They went hither and thither as they pleased, as they were attracted by rumours—now to this master, now to that—and although they cheered their wayfaring, and even won their bread by singing those merry lyrics, sometimes perfectly beautiful, sometimes coarsely free, that have come down to us in the Carmina Burana, they were none the less pariahs, evil of reputation, Ishmaels, whose hand was against their temporary townsmen as their townsmen's hands were against theirs. The older lads, who were nicknamed Bacchanten, were for the most part very fine examples of the genus bully. Each of them had attached to his person a poor little boy of eight or nine whom he called his Schutz. It was this miserable little creature's duty to find food and sustenance for his master by what means he could. He might sing, or beg, or steal—so long as his Bacchant had a sufficiency of plunder the means did not matter. If the Schutz failed, then blows and torture were his portion. Wretchedly housed, they herded together in schools and hostels, fighting at night for the warmest place near the stove. Personal cleanliness was practically unknown, and Platter makes the unblushing confession of the state of his own clothes. On fine afternoons, when his poor little body was warmed for the time by the sun, he would wash his shirt in the river and hang it up to dry. Meanwhile he went a-hunting in his coat, and with a queer grim humour, he used to bury what he had discovered there in a little grave over which he placed a small wooden cross. He pictures himself limping after his Bacchant, who often beat him savagely, seized him by the ears and drew him from the hearth, so that he shrieked like a goat with the knife at its throat. So he went his way, now singing the *Salve* for eggs

at a good wife's door, now exercising his ingenuity to steal a fat goose, and now escaping narrowly from foot-pads. In fights between town and gown, shrewd knocks were his portion, but sometimes the picture brightens a little, and some kindly woman —in Platter's case a market-wife—would take pity on the boy, and entertain him while he abode in her town.

Such experiences are typical of the surroundings amid which Erasmus must have passed his early boyhood. We do not know that he actually suffered the direst hardships of the Schutz, but his plight was often sorry enough. From Deventer, after three years of study there, he was sent to the House of the Collationary Fathers at Hertogenbosch. There he spent other three years, which he always accounted lost. The Fathers were hard and ill-informed men, whose one idea was to break in any boy of exceptional spirit by blows, threats, and scoldings. Erasmus, peculiarly high-strung and sensitive, suffered unutterable mental miseries during this period; physical misery also—for the food was loathsome, and the fish of frequent fast-days made him physically ill. From fish indeed, even when it was fresh, he had all his life an unconquerable aversion. The Hertogenbosch period ended in fever. When he was convalescent, the pressure of his guardians that he should enter the Church overcame his scruples. Too weak to make any effective resistance, he submitted, and entered the House of the Augustinian Canons Regular at Stein. He was professed, and assumed the habit, but he was never in any sense a monk. Here he was equally unhappy. His rest was broken by attendance at the nightly offices. He hated the irregularities of the monks, and they in turn suspected the learning to which he was attached. Once again, however, his brilliant accomplishments came to his aid. The Bishop of Cambray heard of his superb Latin, obtained him leave of absence, took him into his own household, and afterwards sent him to Paris with an exhibition at the Collége Montaigu. At that institution he encountered further personal misery, and his description of his lodging, within the college walls, forms an apt parallel to similar descriptions in the Bacchanten-Schutz of Thomas Platter. Dirt and decay were everywhere, the damp plaster was falling from the walls, the bedding was an abomination. It was owing to the hardships of his life as a student in Paris that he contracted

that painful disorder which martyred him to the very end of his life.

But, physical and mental miseries notwithstanding, the extraordinary spirit of Erasmus lifted him superior to these trials. His erudition was equalled only by his diligence; he seemed, as one of his friends said, 'to live with his pen in his hand.' His accomplishment was entirely individual, his mind was not minutely critical, it was above all literary. He read his authors, not so much for grammatical niceties as for their thoughts. He was passionately attached to the beauty of the Greek and Roman classics, and everything he did was illuminated with a dry, penetrating wit that kept him always a certain measure above his contemporaries. Study Holbein's portrait as you will, you will never pierce the mystery of the half-kindly, half-mocking smile that plays eternally about the thin pursed lips of the most delicately accomplished man of the fifteenth century. He is an eternal paradox—a priest—for he took full orders when he went to reside with the Bishop of Cambray—yet a priest that was no ascetic. Still less was he a gross man, yet he delighted in a most unpriestly way in everything that made life joyous. He has left a most charmingly playful eulogy of the beauty of English girls, whom he used to kiss whole-heartedly whenever he got the chance. There is no evidence to show that he directly referred to Sir Thomas More's charming and accomplished daughters, for they were not the only girls in England, but it is at least certain that he was brought much into contact with them, and they, especially Margaret, had much in common with her father's friend. The bitter and merciless controversialist could in congenial society take off his doctor's gown and joke with a lightness and a playfulness that did not disdain even the trifling pun. Yet for all this unbending, Erasmus remains inscrutable: he is the Sphinx of the Renaissance. Study him as you will, you are left without assurance that you have penetrated to the real man. To Sir Richard Jebb he appeared one whose genial serenity could not be broken by any spiritual struggle. 'This man,' he says, 'we feel would be an intellectual champion of truth and reason. His wit might be as the spear of Ithuriel, and his satire as the sword of Gideon, but he has not the face of a hero or an orator.' The last is certainly true, but to deny the possibility of a spiritual struggle to Erasmus is surely to assume too much. A character so

self-contained and repressed must have made it a first point of honour never to betray to others what it felt most poignantly. With such men the expression of what is most keenly felt is the last impossibility. But Erasmus guarded this in a shrine of his nature with the most jealous watchfulness. It seems to be proved by the habitual airiness of his public manner. The circumstances of his birth, which we know he felt acutely, make it incredible that he should have been placed for ever outside the region of spiritual struggle. The riddle of Erasmus we shall never read, but it remains, a question eternally posed in the enigmatic canvas of Holbein.

Apart from all physical discomforts, Erasmus hated the teaching of Paris. To one of his wide horizon the remnants of mediæval scholasticism to which Paris still clung were hateful. 'The very walls,' he exclaimed, 'had the theological mind.' The teachers, whom he would not dignify with the title of theologians, but called them theologasters, came in for a full share of his invective. They had the rottenest brains, the most barbarous tongues, the most stupid intellects, the most unfruitful learning, the coarsest manners, the spitefullest speech, the blackest hearts. At this point the old joins issue with the new, the Humanist is now in full revolt against the schoolman, and to the accuser fate had entrusted the work of using Humanistic learning to bring about the final downfall of that pseudo-philosophy which for three centuries had obstructed the progress of human thought. Erasmus retired for a short time to Holland, but before long we find him again in Paris, living, it would seem, in more fortunate circumstances. He had as many pupils as he wished. He was continuing with unabated enthusiasm his study of Greek. He had made influential and interesting friends, among them André Landreni, the French poet-laureate. One of his pupils, William Blunt, afterwards Lord Mountjoy, invited him to England, where he arrived about the beginning of 1498. The visit was momentous for the whole after career of Desiderius Erasmus.

In England he found a society already well prepared to appreciate him. In another part of this volume will be traced in more detail the means by which the new impulse had at last spread from Italy to England, there to enjoy a brief time of fruitfulness that was to wither all too soon, for the Renaissance in England, as Andrew Lang says, was rotten at the heart. Forces antagonistic to it had fore-

doomed it from the outset, but its little day was bright enough. More, Colet, Linacre, Grocyn, Tiptoft, Humphrey of Gloucester, Wolsey himself make a sufficient galaxy of culture to illuminate a phase that was unhappily fugitive. With More, Colet, Fisher, and Archbishop Warham, Erasmus formed life-long friendships, and this period was perhaps the happiest of his life. He enjoyed the climate; perhaps he was singularly fortunate in the season. His health improved, and he found his company so accomplished, especially in Greek and Latin, that he wrote to Fisher, 'he hardly cared now to visit Italy.'

In the spring of 1498 he went to Oxford. There he became intimate with Grocyn, the founder of the Greek Chair, with Linacre, founder of the School of Medicine, and William Latimer (not the Martyr), in whom he found a most attractive purity of mind, and a more than virtual modesty united to profound erudition.

This visit lasted only a year. In December 1499 he returned to Paris, which was his chief residence for the next five or six years. During this time, however, he made frequent journeys, principally with the object of procuring books and manuscripts. Of his travels he has left us a most vivid and interesting record, not set down directly as chronicles of wayfaring, but rather as pictures, given allusively in his dialogues, and probably combining in an artistic synthesis the impressions of many occasions. It is to him that we owe our most intimate knowledge of the casual life of a German inn, and the picture is made more valuable by the skilful introduction of a contrasted description of a hostelry in France.

He introduces two travellers, one of whom wonders why so many people stop for two or three days at Lyons. 'For his own part,' he says, 'when once he has started upon a journey, he never rests until he reaches his destination.' His companion, on the other hand, wonders that any one could be got away from the place, because it seems the Sirens are there. Some woman, it seems, was always standing near the table to cheer up the guests with wit and fun. First the travellers had a hearty greeting from the hostess, then came the daughter, a fine woman, merry in manner and in tongue, so that she might have amused Cato himself. They welcomed the guests like old acquaintances. The fare was excellent, the chambermaids assiduous. They inquired if the guests wanted any laundry

work, washed their soiled linen and brought it back. It was the custom for these Hebes to embrace the parting guest, and to send them away with as much affection as if they were all brothers or near relations. The first traveller remarks dryly that very likely such manners suit the French. He prefers the Germans—they are more manly. The other, who has never happened to have been in Germany, asks to be told something of the inns there. His friend, although uncertain that there is any uniformity of custom, promises to relate what he has seen. It appears that in Germany nobody greets the guest, lest they should seem to be courting him, which is considered mean and unworthy of the German gravity. At last, when you have shouted yourself hoarse, some one puts his head out of the window of the stove-room, just as a snail pokes its head out of its shell. You ask him if you may be entertained there. If he does not tell you 'No,' you understand that a place will be found for you. With a wave of the hand he points out the stables. There you attend to your horse yourself, for no servant lifts a finger.

If the tavern is large, a servant will show you the stables, and an inconvenient place for your horse. The better stalls are kept for the nobility. If you find fault with anything you are reminded that you are at liberty to hunt for another tavern. In the cities fodder is hard to come by. Having seen to your horse, you go just as you are—boots, baggage, and mud—to the stove-room. There is one room for all comers. The other traveller here remarks that in France the guests are shown to their sleeping-rooms, where they may change, bathe, and warm themselves, or even take a nap, to which the man with experience of Germany replies 'that there is no such thing there.' In the stove-room you take off your boots and put on slippers. If you like, you change your shirt in public. You hang your clothes, wet with rain, against the stove, beside which you seat yourself in order to get dry. There is water at hand, should you care to wash your hands, but it is generally so clean that you have to seek more water to wash off that ablution.

Those who arrive at four o'clock must wait for supper until nine or ten. In the meanwhile they herd with eighty or ninety persons in the stove-room—footmen, horsemen, tradesmen, sailors, coachmen, farmers, boys, women, healthy people and sick. One is combing his hair, another wiping the perspiration from his face,

another cleaning his winter shoes, a fourth reeks of garlic—what more could you desire? Here is confusion of tongues, out-babeling Babel. At a foreigner of any distinction they stare as if he were a wild beast, and neglect their food rather than miss looking at him.

It was, Erasmus continues, unusual for the guests to call for any refreshment until the actual hour of the meal. Meanwhile, they sat in the stove-room, which resembled a Turkish bath. By some curious illogical reasoning, the more the crowd increased, the more fuel was thrown on, until at last the vapour was unbearable. If any one objected, and called for the window to be opened, he was immediately advised to look out for another tavern. Even the French inns of the day might not have been of the most fastidious, but the account of the German inn moved Erasmus's Frenchman to disgust, and he asked how the Germans could bear such discomfort, and run such risk of infection. He was told that they were sturdy fellows and laughed at these things. Amid such discomforts the company awaited their evening meal, which was at last laid by an old man-servant, savage-looking and shabby. The tablecloth resembled sailcloth, and when it was laid the guests seated themselves.

Each person is supplied with a wooden dish, and a spoon, says Erasmus, of the same kind of silver. A glass and a little piece of bread complete the table equipment. While the porridge is preparing, which usually takes an hour, the guests polish their utensils in quite a leisurely way. It is considered a breach of etiquette to show any impatience. At last the waiting company is rewarded with a little thin sharp wine, a crust follows, and then the dishes come on in great array. Bread, soaked in meat broth, or if it be a fast-day, of herbs; another kind of broth follows, then some warmed up meat or salt fish. Porridge reappears, then roast meat or boiled fish, usually quite palatable although sparingly helped. It was considered most offensive for any one to object to a particular dish, or to rise before the end of a meal, which occupied a round hour if not more, for Erasmus's phrase is rather ambiguous. Finally the waiter or the host appears and asks if anything more is wanted, and serves a better wine. A curious point of the reckoning was that the charge for the wine was uniform, the most temperate paying the same sum as the harder drinker. The drinking seems to have been hard all round. Noise and confusion arise, the would-be jester and

the bore thrust themselves upon the company, the riot grows universal. They sing and prate, shout, dance and thump so that the stove seems ready to fall. No one can hear another speak, but the majority are delighted, and the unfortunate guest who does not find himself in sympathy with his surroundings has perforce to sit and endure the noise until far into the night. Very late the cheese appears, and then the old servant calls the reckoning. Thereafter every one is shown to his room, where there is nothing but a bed, nothing that one can use or steal. The cleanliness of the bedroom was as doubtful as that of the living-room, and if this account is at all typical of Erasmus's general experience during his wanderings, it is sufficient proof of his enthusiasm that a man of his temperament should have found it possible to put up with the discomforts of travel, when he could have stayed in the house of a wealthy patron, surrounded by such luxury as the times afforded. But he seems always to have touched with the *wanderleben*. It is true he had always some definite object which drew him from place to place, but there is a restlessness, a lack of ability to settle, which can only have been due to something in his blood. In spite of his delight in the company he found in England, and the disinclination that he declared it gave him to make the journey into Italy, we must regard that statement of his as a mere *façon de parler*, an impulse of the moment, when he was particularly well pleased with the men around him.

Ardently he desired to see Italy, and seized the first chance of going there in comparative comfort. He had to wait some time before he realised his wish, and it was not until six years after his first visit to England, when he had meanwhile pursued with unabated ardour his Greek and theological studies at Paris, Louvain, Brussels, and Paris once more, that he found his opportunity. Towards the end of 1505 he paid a visit of about six months to England, and stayed at Cambridge, where he delivered a short course in Greek, and received the degree of B.D. He renewed his intimacy with Warham, and made friends with the physician of Henry VII. (Battista Boerio). The doctor wished to send his two sons to study in Italy, and he accordingly proposed that Erasmus should accompany them, not exactly as tutor, but as their general guardian. The offer was accepted, and after a dreadful Channel crossing, the great scholar found himself on his way to realise at length one of the ideals of his

life. He was to remain in Italy three years, which were almost as restless as the years of travel in the North. Turin, Bologna, and Padua were all to know him. At Venice he stayed for a while, superintending the passage of his Adages through the press of Aldus Manutius, which in its constitution and methods takes rank as one of the academies of Italy.

To be intimately connected with a body of men, whose daily speech was Greek, who were employed in giving to the world a new edition of a Greek classic once a month, must have been very congenial to Erasmus; and not only at Venice, but at every Italian city which he visited, he formed warm friendships with the most illustrious men of letters of the time. Before going to Venice he had parted with his pupils, but he was not entirely to escape the rôle of tutor, for in the following year, at Padua, he took up a more interesting governorship. At the request of James IV. of Scotland, who had sent his son Alexander, already in his early teens nominated Archbishop of St. Andrews, to Italy, Erasmus undertook the guidance of this young man. Erasmus found his duties peculiarly pleasant; he was delighted with his amiable pupil, with whom he formed a very ardent friendship, and his duties were not exacting enough to prevent him from continuing his own work. The residence at Padua is one of the pleasantest chapters in Erasmus's history, but master and pupil had to quit that ancient university in December 1508, because of the war-clouds that had arisen, when Julius II. entered into the league of Cambray. Erasmus and Alexander went southward, paying flying visits to Ferrara and Siena. In February they parted, never to meet again as it chanced, for the young Archbishop of St. Andrews died soon after. Erasmus held on his way to Rome, drawn thither by the fame of its magnificent libraries. He calls the Eternal City the most tranquil home of the Muses, a phrase that is written entirely from the point of view of a man who could make peace about him within the four walls of his own study. The Rome of that period was not tranquil. At the very moment of his arrival, Julius II., having returning from the annexation of Bologna, was celebrating a triumph. But to Erasmus as to Prospero, his library was dukedom large enough. He was concerned with the Republic of Letters, whose citizens made him very welcome: for him the strifes of Italy were of small concern.

His own day of strife was still some years distant. For the present he was the quiet Humanist, growing daily in accomplishment, and keeping steadfastly before him his life's ideal, which was not to engage in any polemics, although polemics were thrust upon him, of Church or State, but to fight only to promote the cause of good learning. In that warfare he was polemical enough, and thrust shrewdly, as we shall see later, at the enemies of enlightenment. In Rome then, learning was his first pursuit. He found abundant opportunity. His reception was all that he could have wished. He tells a most delightful story of his first call on Cardinal Grimani. At first the secretary in attendance was not particularly cordial, and was even a little doubtful about taking up the visitor's name, but the moment that the cardinal heard who was awaiting him he made ample amends for his servant's want of civility. He kept Erasmus in conversation for quite a long time, and there is a modern touch in the whole account not only of the reception, but of the prolonged conversation. We are too apt to suppose that the men of other centuries behaved differently in the ordinary relations of life, but one has only to turn to Erasmus's account of that Roman visit to realise that the past and the present are really one, and the realisation is keener if the reader himself has ever happened to call upon a prince of the Church in Rome. There is the same etiquette, the same courtesy, once you have passed the ante-chamber. Outside, there are the same difficulties and delays.

Not only Cardinal Grimani, but Cardinal Riario, Egidius of Viterbo, General of the Augustinian Canons, and Giulio Cardinal de' Medici, afterwards Leo X., were among his most intimate and valued friends, and Erasmus's Italian years were of the most vital importance to his subsequent development. He had now just passed his fortieth year, which, to a man who has led a purely intellectual life, marks no time of failure. Erasmus had reached the maturity of his powers. The long hard discipline of the North had been qualified and tempered by the gentler influence of the South. Everything around him made for expansion, and as De Nolhac remarks, 'His intellectual formation was finished.' In Italy was fully matured that literary talent which was to disturb the ideas of a whole generation, and that the most fruitful of the century.

There, too, it was that he became fully conscious of the new spirit of which he was the great propagator in the northern countries.

The visit to Italy increased not only Erasmus's actual accomplishment, but it widened his reputation. His reception in Rome by its most cultivated circle was the last and most important of the many degrees already conferred upon him. Rome, it is true, gave him no actual handle to his name, but she had approved of him, she had given him his lawful place in the world of letters, and European scholarship was quick to recognise the distinction. So greatly did he enjoy his sojourn in the Eternal City, that for once his restlessness seems almost to have been conquered. He spoke of Rome as though she were in very truth his university; 'Alma urbs,' he calls her, probably with one of his sly and inevitable innuendoes. Other men called their college 'Alma Mater'; Rome, his informal college, he must call 'Alma urbs.' She had nourished and fostered him better than any other scene of his labours. It was with a struggle, he writes to Cardinal Grimani, that at length he tore himself away, and returned to England. He hoped one day to see Rome again; he was ever intending to set out to gratify what he called his *desiderium Romae*, but it was not to be. On quitting her, he bade farewell to tranquillity. There were still, it is true, some gentler passages of life before him, but the time of struggle was at hand, and though he was well equipped to meet it, it is impossible not to regret that Erasmus was flung into the field of controversy. One recent student of his life has remarked, not without justice, that had he stayed at Rome, and taken service with the Roman Curia, where he would quickly have arrived at the cardinalate, his influence might have been instrumental in changing the whole course of European history. It is well to remember that this argument is more than a little biased by the writer's Catholicism, but it is at any rate more than plausible. As the counsellor of Leo X., he might have withheld the Pope from driving Luther into rebellion. Creighton remarks that there was no one at the papal court who really understood Luther. In the light of subsequent events it may be doubted if even Erasmus understood him. In their later intercourse, at any rate, they gave little proof of sympathy. Nor was Luther's work entirely traceable to the attitude of Leo X. The day of reconciliation was past, the Church had already made brave enough efforts,

through the instrumentality of not a few of her devoted sons, to effect reform from within. Not one of these efforts had any appreciable result. The policy of Leo x. only precipitated an explosion that had long been inevitable. These questions, however, belong of right to that part of the subject which treats of the Reformation in its relation to the Renaissance. We have here to follow Erasmus through his third and last English sojourn, when we see him the guest in the houses of Thomas More and Pulteney, an honoured and delightful visitor, whose caustic pen is at the moment engaged upon his first regularly formulated satire, that book of which the wit is still palatable, the *Praise of Fools*. Never disdainful of the humble pun, Erasmus in whimsical compliment of his host, entitled the book *Encomium Moriae*, thus punning on the word More and Moria —folly. The title was itself an oxymoron or pointedly foolish saying, of which the wit is appreciable only to such gently pedantic minds as those of More, Erasmus, and their circle. It is not easy to explain in so many words how they contrived to get their laugh out of it, except by the incongruous chance that had given a Greek word for folly almost the same sound as the name borne by the man who had the wisest head in England. The *Praise of Folly*, with its darting satire, its lively sallies, and its moments of genuine fun, that even at this time of day afford good reading, was not so much an anti-clerical tract as a covert attack upon those who stood in the way of the new learning. The greatest enemies of the cause which Erasmus held nearest his heart were an ignorant and dissolute clergy and a hide-bound theology. He holds up the Religious Orders to ridicule, he laughs at the empty speculations of the schoolman, to whom he proposes grotesque questions for dispute. It is possible that in these days of arid discussion he may have actually heard propounded such questions as he gravely set forth in his satire, but whether actual or not, they are at any rate typical of the depths to which philosophy had sunk. The *Encomium Moriae* was not published at once, but had to wait for three years, until in 1512 it saw the light and rushed into extraordinary success. During those three years Erasmus remained in England, suffering somewhat from disappointment. He obtained no royal patronage. Archbishop Warham offered him an excellent living, but this he declined, although he accepted a pension drawn from its revenues. Fisher

sent for him to Cambridge, where he lectured in Greek, and was shortly appointed to the Lady Margaret Professorship of Divinity.

Not altogether happy, but still untiringly diligent, Erasmus stayed on at Cambridge in rooms that are still pointed out. They are memorable not only for his residence there, but because within those walls he prepared a very large part of his edition of the Greek Testament. Somewhat dissatisfied, however, with the irregular payment of his emolument, and anxious to superintend personally the passage of his Greek Testament through the press of Frobenius at Basle, he resigned his professorship, and in 1514 left England for ever. The Greek Testament aroused a new interest throughout Europe in the sacred writings, and incidentally brought its editor an accession of fame. Erasmus was now acknowledged as the prince of European letters, and for the next five years he enjoyed in his own department, that of scholarship, an undisputed authority. The Netherlands, Germany, France, England, Italy, had given him of their best. He in turn had generously repaid the debt, and the whole Western world acclaimed him as its greatest master in the things of the intellect.

To the end he was to remain the supreme vindicator of the intellect, but unfortunate circumstances were to force his talents into less exalted spheres. The cause of his becoming an ecclesiastical controversialist lay in a point of literature. Erasmus, whose knowledge of Semitic books was of the slightest, wrote to Leo X. on behalf of Reuchlin, and aroused the fierce antagonism of the Dominican Order. About the same time Luther began his agitation against Indulgences, a question upon which Erasmus had already spoken his mind. But while Erasmus was content to expose the doctrine of Indulgences as a passing folly, and to deal with it in a spirit of airy satire, Luther denounced it as a deadly sin. Although Erasmus did not agree with Luther's methods, he was ready to admit that his writings had done good, but he was not prepared to become his ally. Luther, however, shared the popular veneration for Erasmus, and desired to have some actual proof of disapproval. Melanchthon wrote to request this, and Erasmus replied with characteristic caution not unmixed with some touch of his inevitable satire. It was unavoidable that Erasmus should always be somewhat of the superior person. He

was a little waspish, he could not deny himself the pleasure of the skilful phrase in which he gently scored off a more downright and less acute correspondent. Accordingly the letter to Luther contained an equivocal passage, in which he remarked that theological discussion is not advantageously carried on before the ignorant multitude, and he hints to Luther the advisability of a moderate tone. He deprecates the personal attack, he recommends the avoidance of anger, hatred, and vainglory, he assumes, with two-edged and not altogether sincere courtesy, that Luther has followed these methods. He hopes that he will continue to follow them.

Luther must have felt the jibe. His friends unfortunately did not see it. They mistook Erasmus's irony for whole-hearted approval. The inevitable result was a tightening of tension all along the line. Luther went on to new vehemence, and the situation between him and the Holy See grew more and more strained, until at last he brought matters to a crisis by publicly burning the bull 'Exurge Domine' promulgated by Leo x. Erasmus had no desire to drive the Lutheran party to extremes. He believed that they should be kept within the bounds of the Church. He would even have advocated conciliatory means, but as the controversy grew, he gradually found himself less and less in sympathy with his times. Naturally averse from turmoil, he exclaimed that the age was monstrous, and very soon he found himself in a position of extreme difficulty.

He had no desire to attack Luther, but his friends urged him to do so. He took action only when Luther began to formulate a new dogmatic theology. Erasmus, whose polemical work had hitherto been directed against jejune theological teaching, found in Luther's action a grievous cause of offence. Intellectual liberty he believed was in danger of being further compromised. He had spent himself in combating dogma. It gave him little pleasure to reflect that the world seemed likely to exchange one set of dogmas for another. Reluctantly he took up his pen to reply to Luther, aiming his principal attack at the Reformer's denial of free-will. Erasmus's counterblast was his famous treatise *De Libero Arbitrio*, Concerning Free-Will, a moderate and philosophical book, written without enthusiasm, but with sound learning and in a tone of fine courtesy. Luther replied with *De servo Arbitrio*, making up in invective what he lacked in argument. On a side issue the result

was unfortunate for Erasmus. Persons who had formerly venerated him as the greatest literary man of his time now made haste to call him hard names, and to father upon him all the choicest heresies of the early Church. They likened him to the pagan satirist Lucian, who had mocked at the gods. One doctor of divinity kept Erasmus's picture before him in order that he might occasionally enjoy the childish pleasure of spitting upon it. Lutheran and Catholic alike abused him as a destroyer of the Faith. In the same year he produced his delightful *Colloquies*, which achieved a popularity similar to that of his *Praise of Folly*. They were read for their elegant satire, but they helped the author not at all in his predicament, rather did they confirm the popular opinion of him as an irreclaimable scoffer.

The years that followed were full of bitterness. Little by little the influence that he had wielded in the literary world ebbed away, and again he became a wanderer. During the first five years of the controversy he resided in the Netherlands, later he removed to Basle, which he left when the Catholic worship was prohibited. With Lutheranism he was entirely out of sympathy, not so much on spiritual grounds, but with the characteristic attitude of the student. The whole position is summed up in his exclamation, 'Lutheranism is the death of good learning.' It may be said without casting any slur upon Erasmus that he was a scholar first and a Christian afterwards. No form of religion could have any value to him unless it made for the cultivation of the finer flowers of the mind. His next halting-place was Freibourg, where he remained watching with a gloomy foreboding the course of events. We have said in a certain paradoxical sense that Erasmus was a scholar first and a Christian afterwards. That must not be taken to imply any slur on the reality of his faith. That faith indeed he vindicated in one of his most memorable utterances at Freibourg: 'I hear the voices of orthodox and of heretic, of Catholics and of anti-Catholics, nowhere do I see Christ.' He was not altogether without hope, and to the end he sought the peace of the Church, pleading for it in his *De Amabili Ecclesiae Concordia*. He sought that all Church institutions should be simplified, that the tenets should not be man-made systems of theology, but merely the teaching of the Gospel. He would have reduced the number of the clergy and of the religious, and have increased their efficiency and bettered their character. Just

before the end, he was flattered by the dream that the peace he saw had really come to the Church. Fortunately for him, he died before the fiercest struggle began. He lived long enough to hear of the Council of Pacification, proposed by Paul III., who offered him a cardinal's hat. That honour he rejected. He was pleased, but he said it would be like saddling an ox. His bodily infirmities were increasing, he believed that he had not long to live. He was, he said, but a little ephemeris. Still he strove to reach Basle, where the printing of his *Ecclesiastes* called for his attention, but he lingered only a month, passing away on July 12th 1536, in the sixty-ninth year of his age.

What Petrarch did for Italy that, in a wider sense, Erasmus did for Europe. Unlike Petrarch, he was profoundly conscious of his mission, of which, amid all the distractions of his later life, he never lost sight. In spite of the sub-acidity of his nature, he is one of the most gracious and attractive figures of the later fifteenth and early sixteenth cenutry. He had a genius for friendship, and although he incurred enmity he was never a man to make enemies. Amid his colossal labours he yet found time to write what is probably the most voluminous correspondence that has come down to us from any writer. In these letters we have a picture of the man himself, of his friends, and of his times. He stands before us, for all his ascetic appearance, as one to whom the good things of this life, tasted delicately and in moderation, were not without value. He was fastidious in his dress, and not altogether in love with the clerical habit. It was some relief to him when he obtained a dispensation from the Pope, permitting him to dispense with the white scapulary of the Augustinian Canons. This permission was accorded to him during the plague in Bologna, when his white hood caused him to be mistaken for one of the plague doctors, who had to distinguish themselves by a badge of a very similar shape and appearance. Until he was relieved of that encumbrance, he had found that everybody shunned him in the streets.

Erasmus was more universal in his learning and accomplishments than any of the scholars that preceded him. It is questionable if any of his successors have had so wide a range, and has left so colossal a monument of industry. But if he conferred on Europe a great gift of learning, systematised and prepared for the work of future

critics, he was only repaying a debt that Europe had laid him under, for the whole Continent, in so far as the Continent then counted for anything in intellectual matters, had given him of its best. Holland, Germany, France, and Switzerland laid the foundation of his training. When he came to England he found that the Italy he longed to visit had met him, as it were, by the way, for in Grocyn, lately returned from the fountain of Italian learning, he found an instructor who gave his Greek studies a new impetus and a new direction. Thereafter, as we have seen, he attained to Italy herself, and was moulded by her into the perfect scholar of the Renaissance.

There is something singularly amiable in the personality of Erasmus. The romantic circumstances of his birth gave him that peculiar fineness of nature and of mind, and also that attractiveness of appearance—in him, hardly beauty, or even handsomeness—which is so often seen in those of like origin. For all his satire, and even his bitterness, he was an exquisitely pleasant companion. The most cultivated, the most urbane wits of his day seemed no sooner to have made his acquaintance than they were bound to him by ties of lifelong friendship. He was all things to all men. More, Colet, Fisher, Warham, and Reginald Pole were men of extremely diverse temperament and disposition, yet they were united in their love and regard for Erasmus. We have seen in what esteem he was held at the papal court. Courteous and refined in his manner, he was yet not altogether the courtier, his was not the bearing idealised by Baldassare Castiglione in his immortal portrait of the perfect Italian gentleman. It is rather the manner, penetrating, charmingly polite, yet a little aloof, a little superior, which is so often seen in the best type of university don at the present day. In an age when scholars were often careless of the sweeter and better things of life, Erasmus set a different fashion. He was perhaps the founder of what we may call, for want of a better term, the academic manner in its best manifestation. In his cold, thin way he was luxurious. He loved to go richly dressed in his furred doctor's gown, he surrounded himself with simple but elegant things. He liked a glass of ripe, good Burgundy, in strict moderation. He was never idle. He said jestingly that he had no time to be ill, and yet he was seldom free from pain, latterly of the most excruciating. But through it all, his mental

energies never flagged; to the last he continued to comment, to edit, to correspond, and no suffering could make him flinch from the task for which he lived, and in the midst of which he died—the quickening of the intellectual perceptions and vigour of the whole Western world.

CHAPTER XXIII

MARTIN LUTHER

At the opposite pole of character and temperament to Erasmus stands another figure, greater certainly though far less gracious, but yet with that roughness which was necessary to the impression he was to make upon the world.

Erasmus was entirely the child of the Italian Renaissance as it found its best expression in the Teutonic mind. Through Germany, however, it was to cease to be a mere expression of intellectual culture, and was to become a world force, making in a deeper sense for the liberty of the human soul. The Renaissance as it was expressed in terms of German thought has had to change its name. When we consider Luther and his work, we think less of an educational than of a religious movement—Renaissance has become Reformation. In Erasmus and Luther, the Reformation had two contrasted but most fitting instruments. The scholar of Rotterdam, always the loyal son of the Church, is a reformer, only in so far as he aided the spirit of learned inquiry into the sacred writings, attacked monastic corruption and vindicated philosophically the doctrine of free-will. Luther, on the other hand, narrower in many ways, even to bigotry and intolerance, yet with a broad and persuasive humanity, and above all, an Olympian detestation of humbug, was to give Europe its first great impetus towards those gradual movements towards liberty which can be traced through the successive Reformations, down through Puritanism and the Civil War in England, to the later agitations that have taken for their cause Humanity in its essence. The protagonist of the Reformation was not trained as Erasmus had been, in a school influenced directly by the new learning of Italy. The son of a miner of Eisleben, he was born in circumstances of the narrowest poverty, on the 10th November 1483. When he was still very young, the family removed to Mansfeld, and before he was in his teens, the boy

was sent to the Grammar School of Magdeburg, and afterwards to that of Eisnach, where his master was Trebonius. That famous pedagogue made it a rule to bow to the boys every morning as he entered the school, saying 'There may be some great men before us.'

Luther's life at this time was that of the poor schoolboy of the period. Like Platter and the rest, he went singing in the streets for bread. Like Platter too, he found a benefactress. Frau Cotta, seeing him singing in the streets on a cold winter's day, brought him into her house, where he lived until his school days were over. At eighteen he went to the university of Erfurt. Up to this time it had been his father's intention that Luther should study law, but the death of one of his dearest friends, and an extraordinary terror which fell upon him during a thunderstorm, turned his thoughts to religion. In 1505, after he had taken the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Erfurt, he entered the Augustinian convent there, and continued independent studies in theology. On reading the Vulgate for himself, he was surprised to find more Gospels and Epistles than were in the Lectionaries of the Church. Gradually he began to doubt the dogmatic theology of Rome. With his friend Staupitz he studied, discussed and wrestled, and came at last to some formulation of what was afterwards to be known as the Evangelical Doctrine. As yet, however, he had no thought of parting company with Rome. If the idea of Reformation occurred to him, it was as it had occurred to Arnold of Brescia, to Jacopone da Todi, and to Savonarola in Italy, and to Busch, Capistran, and Geiler in Germany. Any changes that he desired were to be made from within. In 1507 he was ordained priest, and in 1508 he went to Wittenberg, where the chair of dialectics and physics had been given him in the new university founded by the Elector of Saxony. As a professor he became immediately popular, but the influence of his work was not for the moment directly theological. Theology, however, had him in her grasp. A year after he came to Wittenberg, he took the degree of Bachelor of Theology, and began those lectures on the Scriptures and, more important still, those sermons in the University Church, which were first to sow the seeds of the great dissension. As a preacher he had Wittenberg at his feet. The powerful logic, the novelty of his doctrine, the quaint, forcible, and at times even coarse humour of his illustrations, were exactly calculated to appeal to the mind of

the German burgher. His appeal, however, was not entirely to the bourgoisie, for he counted many nobles among his adherents. The Elector of Saxony was his life-long friend. Strange as his doctrine might seem, Luther was not molested, and gradually the fame of his sermons spread throughout Europe.

In 1511 he paid a visit to Rome, which he approached with the devotion of an ancient Hebrew drawing near to Mount Sion, only to be bitterly scandalised by the corruptions and profligacy of the city and the clergy. He witnessed the exposure of the picture of St. Veronica, and noted that the holy towel was shown from a gallery of such height that no one could very well make out what it was. Yet although he saw and regretted the inconsistencies of the Holy City, he was by no means shaken in his allegiance to the Church. 'I was,' he says, 'at that time a most insane papist.' That utterance alone ought to have thrown doubts upon what has until lately been considered the central and most dramatic incident of his pilgrimage to Rome. It used to be related how Luther when climbing the Santa Scala, said to be Pilate's staircase, on his knees, a pious act to which a thousand years of Indulgence was attached, suddenly heard the words ringing in his ears, 'The just shall live by faith.' According to the ancient legend, he arose and walked down the staircase, convicted of the folly of his action. From that incident many excellent and uncritical people used to date the germ of the Reformation. Last year there was discovered an unknown letter of Luther's, in which he gives his own account of the affair. There is not a word about the mysterious voice quoting Scripture in his ear. He was not climbing the staircase for his own sake, but in order to get a relative out of purgatory. When half way up, it occurred to him that there was little use in what he was doing. He thought the old man might get himself out of purgatory, and therewith abandoned the rather painful and profitless ascent.

He left Rome, despite his many disappointments, as true a son of the Church as he had entered it, and we shall see that he remained faithful to her until he was driven from the last tenable position. It has been doubted that even when he composed and nailed up his famous thesis at Wittenberg that he had any thought of defiance to Rome. It has even been suggested that he merely wished to provoke an academic disputation, in order to clear his

own mind upon the question of Indulgences. This seems rather wide of the mark. It is perfectly possible that, like every other originator of a great movement, Luther did not see the full significance of his action, but that he had no critical design is manifestly impossible. There is no room for doubt that his first intention was to expose the charlatanry of Tetzel. In Wittenberg at that time there was no better way of doing this than by provoking an academical discussion. To say that he merely wished to clear his mind on the theory of Indulgences is little short of absurd. Despite the inconsistencies in detail between certain of his thesis, his main purpose is clear. He had come to the point with regard to the traffic in Indulgences at which his conscience would not allow him to be silent any longer—the *Ninety-five Theses* constituted a polemic, and of that he was well aware. It is possible that, but for a single circumstance, Luther might have been content to remain one of those reformers from within, such as Geiler of Strasburg, whose work, although not unimportant, made no universal impression. Had he continued merely to fight obscurant or erroneous doctrine, he might never have come into serious collision with the Church.

The Vatican at first favoured a policy of masterly inactivity towards Luther. About theological questions there may be two opinions. On questions of common sense there is but one, and when Luther came into conflict with mercenary and corrupt impostors, he could no longer remain a mere theological disputant, but had to become the fiery gladiator. It was about this time that John Tetzel, a Dominican friar, was sent into Germany to carry on the trade in Indulgences, which had gradually become a fixed part of the Roman doctrine. By an insidious process the attributes of the Pope had been augmented by that of Universal Pardoner by the extension of the charge to Peter—'I will give unto thee the keys of Hell and of Death.' It was argued that the occupant of Peter's chair could by a definite act release men from the consequence of their sin. By gradual transition, this doctrine was extended until at length the absolution took the form of a written document, purchasable for money. It was to sell these Indulgences to replenish the coffers of the Holy See that Tetzel and his crew of Indulgence-mongers swept down upon Germany in 1517. The ignorant laity flocked to Tetzel's market by their thousands to

purchase the precious parchments, which were not ignored even by the better informed. There were cases, however, in which polite scepticism vindicated the sterling common sense of the German people. Certain young gentlemen approached one of Tetzel's agents, and asked whether it would be possible to purchase Indulgence not only for sins committed, but for sins still in the future. They were told that this was so for a sufficient consideration. Accordingly they received the necessary parchment exonerating them from the consequences, in particular of acts of personal violence. As the Indulgence-monger left the city, the wags waylaid him, beat him, took his money, and then showed him the Indulgence paper.

That was a foretaste of the hard times that were yet to fall upon Friar John Tetzel. The scandal of his proceedings at last roused Luther to take his first definite action in vindication of his convictions. His action, if theatrical in its details, had none of the flimsiness of such displays. On October 31st 1517, Wittenberg was aroused by appearance of Luther's *Ninety-five Theses against Indulgences*, which he had nailed overnight to the door of the University Church. The excitement they aroused was immediate and profound. The popular sympathy was with Luther from the first. The broad common sense of Germany had only to be shown the essential absurdity of Indulgences, and above all of Indulgence-mongering, to turn from Tetzel and his crew. The papal emissary was hounded out of the city, and retired to Frankfort, where he composed his counter-theses criticising the arguments of Luther. When he published these, he at the same time burned Luther's theses. The students of Wittenberg retaliated by burning Tetzel's theses before the Elster gate. The controversy now became much wider. Leading theologians—Hochstraten, Prierias, and Luther's own friend, Dr. Eck—now engaged with the reformer in long and heated arguments, by tract, by letter, and by public disputation, which in those pro-journalistic days took the place of the newspaper controversy. All this time Rome looked on without grave concern. In Peter's chair sat that brilliant sceptic, the great-grandson of Cosmo de' Medici, and grandson of the pagan, yet devout Catholic, Lorenzo. Leo X. understood and respected exceptional ability. He had all the modern disposition to make allowance for its supposed extravagances. When his cardinals urged him to take

more rigid notice of the disturbance which had arisen in Germany, the Pope merely remarked: 'Friar Martin is a man of genius—I will not have him molested.' But at last the cardinals prevailed upon the Pontiff to intervene, and in 1518 Luther was summoned to Rome in order to defend his position. His friends were alarmed, for they thought, not without reason, that if Luther once went to Rome he would never be allowed to return. The Elector interfered, and Luther's personal presence at Rome was dispensed with. Instead, Cardinal Cajetan was sent to Augsburg to meet him and ascertain his position. The proceedings were without result, and were entirely unfair to Luther, who was allowed only to state his views, but not to defend them. Both the legate and the reformer lost their temper—there was a sceno—and Luther withdrew. The inquisition was carried on by Miltitz, but without result one way or the other. Meanwhile the controversy between Eck and Luther culminated in the great public disputation held at Leipzig in 1519. The discussion was barren. Both Luther and Eck claimed the victory. The following year was memorable for the publication of Luther's *Address to the Christian Nobles of Germany*, and his *Treatise on the Babylonish Captivity of the Church*. The intervening period had been one of growing advance in conviction and in courage.

The question of Indulgences had fallen into a secondary place, and Luther now boldly attacked the whole doctrine of the Church of Rome. This was more than the Roman Curia could stand. They brought pressure to bear upon Leo X., and the result of their exertions was the bull 'Exurge Domine,' which precipitated the Reformation. Regretfully Luther saw that he could not do the work he intended within the Church itself. He stood at the parting of the ways, and henceforth he must stand outside the Church's pale.

But the actual parting was not yet. One more attempt to compromise had to be made. It was brought about by the Emperor Charles V., who, in the hope of still composing the differences of the Church, convened in 1521 the Diet of Worms, before which Luther was summoned to appear. This assembly of princes and ecclesiastics afforded a splendid and many coloured background for the most dramatic moment in the life of Luther. It was led up to by delays, as cunning as those of the theatre itself. Again Luther's friends were alarmed, and although he held the imperial safe-conduct,

they feared to let him enter Worms. But with the memorable words, 'Though as many devils set at me in Worms as there are tiles upon the roofs, yet will I go in.' And so the burly, plebeian-looking monk, in his plain habit of an Augustinian brother, went in before the imperial court. Once more he was denied a fair hearing. He might not argue, he might only state his position. At last, seeing it was useless to proceed further, he vindicated in two or three brief sentences the cause of reason and of conscience, concluding with the famous phrases which became the watchword of the Reformation, 'Hier stehe ich—ich kann nicht anders, so hilf mir Gott—Amen.'

Therewith he left the Diet. Outside in the streets the populace watched him with amazement and concern. He had been provided with a guard by virtue of his safe-conduct. The cry ran through the crowd that he was a prisoner. 'They are taking me to my hotel,' he said, and the popular anxiety was stilled for the moment. But in more influential heads, mistrust was not so easily allayed. The Elector and the inner circle of Luther's aristocratic friends were determined to take no risks. On his way back from Worms, Luther vanished, and for a time men feared the worst. But the Elector knew what he was about. A company of knights had waylaid the reformer in the forest, and carried him off to the romantic castle of the Wartburg that towers above Eisenach. In that castle, about which clustered the legends of the Minnesingers, and in whose hall took place the famous contest of Tannhäuser, Luther remained hidden for more than a year. Gradually his friends in the outer world were allowed to know that he was safe. Occasionally he was seen taking exercise beyond the castle walls. The period of confinement in the Wartburg was memorable alike for its spiritual storms and for its fruitfulness in literary production. Luther occupied himself chiefly with his translation of the German Bible, which has fixed a linguistic standard for Germany, just as the *Divine Comedy* crystallised the language of Italy. His happiness in his work was broken by strange wrestlings of the spirit.

In many respects Luther was still the child of the Middle Ages. He had not absorbed that delicate Italianate temperament, mingled with a fine Hellenism, which all but placed Erasmus among the sceptics of the Renaissance. Luther's peasant birth, his German genius, nurtured on legend and superstition, left him always the

prey of the less nobly supernatural. Profoundly convinced of the existence of the powers of darkness, he believed in his darker moods that he was subject to the persecutions of a personal devil. Here it is impossible to acquit him of a gloomy fanaticism which sometimes took strange and almost unbelievable forms in one whose humanity and kindliness are beyond dispute. It is said on good authority that once he even exhorted a mother to throw her child into the river because in the unfortunate infant Luther discerned the devil. He had the defect of his quality, and of his environment. His intense spirituality manifested itself thus on a darker side. He stood for light; he did not yet stand himself in the full light. He was sensitive to signs, as he conceived them. To intellectual culture, as many of his contemporaries understood it, he was indifferent. He was learned—in many ways he was accomplished—but still in him there lurked strange vestiges of the Dark Ages. On a wall of his room in the Wartburg they still show the dark stains, left there when the reformer hurled his ink-pot at what he believed to be the actual apparition of the devil. For this latter aberration it is easy of course to account by remembering his imperfect health at times, the struggles and excitements through which he had passed, and the reaction upon a nature, rough perhaps, but still most tenderly sensitive. In his love of good company, good talk, fine music, and the happy society of children, Luther was very much the child of the New Age. His is not the delicacy of an Italian scholar of the Renaissance. His pleasures were never altogether freed from the heaviness of the Teuton, but he remains none the less amiable even in his roughness, a 'flower upon furze.'

On his release from the Wartburg in 1522, Luther returned to the duties of his chair at Wittenberg, from which he exercised an increasing influence upon his countrymen and upon Europe. To this period belongs his acrimonious reply to Henry VIII. on the question of the sacraments. He appears in a finer light in his attitude towards the peasants' war. It is usual for his detractors to blame him for that outbreak, but, on the other hand, it must be remembered that, but for his moderate counsels and the hold that he had upon the popular mind, it would certainly have gone to still more terrible lengths than it did. It was a period to Luther of great mental anxiety, and it contained an incident that gave grave scandal

to his friends, even to Melanchthon. Nisard says that it was in order to distract himself from the miserable happenings of the peasants' war that he took unto himself a wife. This is a mere rhetorical flourish on Nisard's part, and may be dismissed as such. Luther's marriage was a thoroughly well-considered action, as well as the result of sincere personal inclination, but it was doubly scandalous to those who still clung to the old régime, not only that a priest should marry, but that he should marry a renegade nun. His union with Catherine von Bora, his beloved 'Frau Doctorin' as he called her, was fortunate for them both. Gradually the scandal, as it seemed to their friends, was lived down, and the Luther household became one of the most pleasing centres of the life of Wittenberg. At his table Luther entertained Melanchthon, Justus Jonas, and many other kindred spirits. The Elector himself was a frequent visitor. The evenings were spent with homely hospitality and music. Of the conversations Luther has left a record in his 'Table-talk,' and from these we know what the life of the professorial circles in a German university town of that period was like. It is not very polished, but it is eminently kindly—in a word, it is German.

All this time Luther had been engaged in constant controversies and a voluminous correspondence. Hitherto, as we have seen elsewhere, he and Erasmus had been entirely friendly, but a serious breach was now to occur. In 1525 Erasmus produced his treatise in support of free-will. With its publication he and Luther parted company. The reformer replied with his treatise on the 'Bondage of the Will,' and the period that followed is marked by a regrettable note of irascibility and even of scurrility in his handling of opponents. For five years more he was prominently before the public in the work of formulating the new theology. Unfortunately his labours in this direction were insensibly reactionary. He had begun by fighting dogma, and had brought belief back to its simplest and most essential elements, but as soon as he put his hand to the perilous work of creed-making, Luther, without realising what he was about, simply restored the reign of dogma. At Marburg, in 1529, he met Zwingli and the Swiss reformers in conference, and discussed the differences between the new German and the new Swiss theology. Next year he bore a most important although not an official part in the

drawing up of the doctrine which was to be the standard henceforth of the Lutheran Church. The Emperor summoned a conference at Augsburg, at which the reformers were to declare their doctrine in set terms. It was considered in the interests of harmony that the chief representative should be not Luther but Melanchthon. With this arrangement Luther was no doubt perfectly content, for he admired Melanchthon's genius, and long before had said to him 'The little Greek beats even me in theology.' Luther did not go to Augsburg, but remained in attendance at Torgau, where he was in continual consultation with his colleagues. When the initial questions had been settled, Melanchthon drew up the formal articles, which document was presented to the Emperor. The original was in German, which Melanchthon sometime afterwards translated into Latin; still later, he produced another version in which, upon his own authority, he made several important alterations, especially in the articles touching the sacraments. It is in these variations that the Lutheran Church is principally divided at the present day. We are unfortunately unable to say how far the later differences are at variance with the original documents, for the first German and Latin versions have been entirely lost. The Augsburg Confession was a temperate and moderate statement, and after its promulgation the Lutheran Church was permitted to go its way in peace. Luther had still sixteen years of life before him, but they were for the most part uneventful. With the Confession of Augsburg his work was practically done—thereafter he is less in the arena. He died at Eisleben on February 15th 1546.

Luther stands apart, and yet inseparable from the Renaissance. He was in a restricted sense an outcome of the new quickening of the human intelligence. With the refinements of the period in thought and in life he had not much in common, but with its extraordinary vitality, its driving and constructive force, its strange passions for the welfare of humanity, he is entirely at one. The Renaissance has been called the Discovery of the Individual. The phrase is in danger of becoming cant, but it has yet a very real significance. In the men of the Italian Renaissance there arose a desire to quicken individual interests. Luther awoke a consciousness for the welfare of the individual soul. These words have not to be taken in any evangelical sense. They are used merely as an

attempt to convey the relation in which Luther conceived himself standing to his fellow-men. He thought he saw them duped by a system of colossal imposture, and he sought to free them, and to bring them into that spiritual life which he himself believed he had found in the independent study of the Scriptures. The clouds of the Dark Ages, it is true, hung about him till the end. Had he experienced the full light in an intellectual sense at the Renaissance, he could never have broken with Erasmus, and their desire for a mutual understanding, founded on a real personal regard, would never have been frustrated. But when all discounts have been made, the moral greatness of Martin Luther, his bluff Teutonic honesty, and his sincere desire for the welfare of mankind, remain indisputable. By virtue of that moral force of his he towers above contemporaries whose attainments were purely intellectual. On him, as it were, the wave of the Renaissance is gathered up again. The forces that were awakening swept over Europe with undiminished power, but they had taken a new character. What had formerly been an enthusiasm for the flowers of the mind had become confused with the theology and its consequent heart-burnings. Europe was to be stirred to her depths, and in a way that no merely academic issue could have procured.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE RENAISSANCE IN SPAIN

THE tragedy of Spanish history since the days of Ferdinand and Isabella has left Spain an outcast among the nations. A country rich in natural advantages, blessed throughout by far the greater part of its rural districts with hard-working kindly people, beautiful throughout far extended regions with a beauty which few European countries can boast, Spain to-day is hardly better managed or more progressive than Russia. It has thriving industries, but they are to no small extent in the hands of foreigners; its administration is corrupt and ineffective, its governing class is compact of ignorance, eloquence, superstition, and incapacity. The country's greatest triumphs have been gained at her own expense, the expulsion of the Jews and the Moors was responsible in part for her decline, and the loss of those vast overseas dominions which she sent her *hijos predilectos* to misgovern has been a blessing in disguise. A land destined in many regions of exquisite fertility to be an earthly paradise, Spain is the despair of its lovers and a mockery to its enemies. Even to-day a sane progressive democratic government, which dared to devise reasonable land laws and see them carried out, might change the character of the country in a few generations; but in many aspects Spain now stands where she stood when the spirit of the Renaissance was brooding over her, and the Spanish Pope, Alexander VI., had given her with a stroke of the pen the sovereignty of the New World so recently discovered. The gift was pleasing to her native pride as a great maritime nation, and, while the Renaissance gift of a new world of thought was despised and rejected, the Borgia's grant of a new world of treasure and humanity was eagerly welcomed.

In the course of years it was apparent that the loss of the world of the spirit had been fatal to Spain's position in Europe, and the loss of the material world was a corollary when Torquemada and his followers had taken their toll of Spain's intellect. She had not the

administrative genius to hold what had been given. To expel what was best within her boundaries, to develop superstition to the fullest imaginable extent, to repress seekers after truth, and even to decimate by process of ecclesiastical law the forces that might have served her—this has been the fate of Spain. To say as much is to explain how the spirit of the Renaissance, for all that it expressed itself in great seafaring men and a few poets, painters, and dramatists who came late into the field, could not thrive in the atmosphere of the Iberian Peninsula. It could serve the world through the medium of Spaniards, it could not serve Spain itself. Whatever the fate of the Church of Rome elsewhere, it has contrived to maintain its hold on Spain, and though the historian would not dare to hold Rome responsible for either the power of the Inquisition or the triumph of the followers of Ignatius Loyola, the fact remains that each has worked in the name of Holy Mother Church for the suppression of independent thought and the destruction of every form of liberalism. What the world has lost by the destruction of Spanish genius we shall never know, but the names of Pizarro, Cortes, Columbus among explorers and navigators, of Cervantes, Calderon, and Lope de Vega among novelists and playwrights, and El Greco and Velasquez among painters, would seem to suggest that, given a fair chance, the Iberian Peninsula would have contributed no inconsiderable share to the glories of the Renaissance within its own ample boundaries.

The first beginnings of Humanism in Spain[1] date from the fifteenth century, and are due to a scholar of native birth. This was Arias Barbosa, who had gone to Italy to study under Politian. He it was who introduced the study of Greek into Spain, and made it acceptable during the twenty years he taught the language at Salamanca. His work was extended by the better known scholar Antonio Lebrixa, who studied for ten years in Italy, and on his return in 1473 taught in Seville, Salamanca, and Alcalá. He was a less accomplished Hellenist than Barbosa, but a man of wider culture. He was something of an Orientalist and knew Hebrew. In Spain he occupied a position similar to that of Budaeus in France. His more famous pupil, Fernando De Guzman Nunez of Valladolid, taught Greek at Alcalá and Salamanca; but his principal work was Latin, and in 1536 he published the edition of Seneca upon which

[1] For this subject see R. C. Jebb, *Cambridge Mod. Hist.*, vol. i.

DONNA MARIANA OF AUSTRIA, BY VELASQUEZ

This picture was brought from the Escorial to the Prado in 1845. The lady was the second wife of Philip IV., and would have been the wife of Don Balthasar Carlos had he lived.

his reputation rests. Lebrixa's influence extended to Portugal, for his pupil, the historian and poet Resendo, was one of the earliest teachers of the new learning in Lisbon.

Spain, but for the Counter-Reformation, would have afforded good soil for the growth of the Humanistic movement. At first even some enlightened Churchmen were willing to promote the cause of knowledge. Through the influence of Cardinal Ximenes, the New Testament, in Greek, was printed at Alcalá in 1514 and published eight years later. The cardinal's interest in the progress of education in Spain is commemorated by the university of Alcalá itself, for it is his foundation. At Alcalá, too, was produced one of the most beautiful early founts of Greek type. But the Humanists had no real strength; their zeal did not avail to combat the general hatred and suspicion of priests and clergy, and protection, where it existed, was too slight to secure success for the cause. There was in Spain no parallel to the popular interest which had made the Renaissance part of the national life of Italy. In 1530, after the agreement between Pope Clement VII. and the Emperor Charles V., Spain was formally committed to the Counter-Reformation, that self-defensive movement of Catholic reaction which, while aiming at the reform of the Church from within, became a machine for the suppression of heresy, which unfortunately included every educational work not in accordance with doctrine. Humanism, the foe of Aristotelianism, was necessarily inimical to the Church, which stood by the scholastic interpretation of Aristotle. The Inquisition recognised in Spain, in 1478, with a special view to the suppression of Judaism, became the principal instrument for the restraint of the new learning. Even the Jesuits, in whose ranks in other countries many accomplished Humanists were to be found, were hostile to classical scholarship in Spain. Latin flourished, it is true, though not as a popular study. But good Latinists—Sanchez of Burgos and Achille-Estaçe the Portuguese commentator—kept this branch of Humanism alive. In what is called 'pure scholarship,' however, Spain produced few names of the first rank even in Latin, while Greek languished and was finally lost.

Yet the impulse that had swept Western and Northern Europe was not to be wholly ineffective even in Spain. The stimulus had been given, and although Humanism in a special sense made little headway, the Spaniard's native genius responded to the spirit of the

age. Spain and Portugal achieved great things—their navigators were widening the bounds of the earth and consequently the intellectual horizon. The breath of the spring that came to Italy with St. Francis was felt at length in the Iberian Peninsula. The Renaissance in Spain, concerning itself less with the letters of dead authors, produced a native literature, small in compass relatively—Don Quixote has been called not inaptly 'Spain's one book'—but intensely national and of vital importance to European culture. How the Spanish intellect rose for a time superior to the forces that threatened to crush it can now be considered in greater detail.

The genius of the Latin races was more deeply stirred than the genius of the Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon, and if Spain could have produced and preserved a Wyclif or a Luther, the story of the European progress would never have been cast in its present form. But freedom of the spirit, the spread of knowledge, the existence of any form of art that the Church could neither control nor direct, these things were impossible in Spain, whose rulers made haste to strangle the Renaissance in its youth, as though fearful that its development would involve their downfall. The land that could rear Jesuits and Inquisitors could not support for long thinkers, poets, artists, philosophers. Mediævalism, vanquished elsewhere, merely changes its guise in Spain; it has changed its name while retaining its spirit to the present hour. Perhaps we may find here an explanation of the well-nigh universal sadness one meets throughout the country from Sebastian to Cadiz. The Spaniard, represented by those who do not know him as the incarnation of gaiety, is not really light-hearted; his native dignity is tinged with melancholy, and though the modern East with its great commercial development and its estrangement from the rest of Spain has produced a race apart, North and South, West and Centre live to-day in the shadow of a picturesque but sombre mediævalism that has not greatly changed since the days of Charles V. and Philip II. The shadow of the Moorish and Jewish tragedies is upon them yet. It is in Spain that we may realise, however faintly, what Europe would have been like to-day if the Renaissance had not come to it, or if, having come, the Church had been powerful enough totally to suppress its manifestations.

It may be granted that circumstances were specially favourable

to the development of Church power in Spain at the time when the Renaissance was taking shape beyond her boundaries. The Conquest of Granada, the Union of Castile and Aragon, the expulsion of the Moors and Jews, were all intimately associated with questions of belief. Spaniards saw in the success of their arms over the Moor—whose architecture and agricultural methods, to say nothing of his blood, are a part of them to this day—the direct fruit of Divine intervention. What more natural, in the circumstances, than the rise of an Inquisition to search for those who did not live by the light of the true faith? The Deity had done much for them; they must do their best for Him.

It is not difficult to understand why Torquemada succeeded in convincing Ferdinand and Isabella that the country required to be saved, and that the Inquisition was the proper medium of salvation. Happily the genius of a country often succeeds in manifesting itself under the most unfavourable circumstances, and Spain, hindered and thwarted at home, robbed of the men of promise, restricted and dragooned, brought to the altar of the Renaissance the tribute of Exploration. Her seafarers and conquistadores were greater than their failings. Whatever their faults, we cannot see them in a fair perspective in the light of the twentieth century. We of this country have every reason to honour them, for they not only carried the message of their generation into an unknown continent of their own discovery, but they established the Imperial idea and laid the foundations of Anglo-Saxon prosperity. They were heroes, though there may have been much in their heroism that cannot commend itself to the modern idea; they met with small reward, because Spain was ever suspicious of brains; even such a wonder-worker as Velasquez was a person of no account at the court of his patron, Philip IV.

If the Spanish contribution to modernity does not at first sight seem notable, it is because we do not recollect the enormous effect that the discovery of new worlds must have had upon the mental vision of the time. A glance at the sixteenth-century maps will serve to tell the truth far more clearly than the written word may hope to do. In the twentieth century the prizes of discovery are reserved for science; in the times of the great navigators there was no limit to the possibilities of the world we live in, and this knowledge gave an added zest to life, a fresh interest in the seemingly

inexhaustible treasures that might fall to the fearless navigator who, with a few daring fellows, would follow the uncharted paths that led to the unknown. It was a time of inexact information, rumour had time and space at its command, imagination might run riot, and did. Out of such a period of universal excitement came a stimulus to all men of adventurous spirit, and the successes and honours of the few were a spur to those whose failure history has found no pace to record.

The suppression of the Renaissance in Spain is primarily the work of two men, Torquemada and Loyola, the first a destroyer, the second a patient builder-up of the forces of destruction, and a man far more worthy of detailed consideration. In glancing briefly at Spain's contribution to the Renaissance, we have to concern ourselves here only with the poets, painters, and playwrights. Though Camoens is not brought within the group, his was at least a manifestation of the genius of the Peninsula, and the dividing line between Portugal and Spain is little more than an arbitrary decision of man. The Spanish conquistadores having been considered elsewhere, it will be necessary to note the growth of the Order of Jesus, which, driven out of every country in turn, has never been long absent from Spain, and has succeeded, as no other institution before or since, in suppressing the free play and development of the human spirit. To say this is not necessarily to overlook the exquisite devotion to noble causes that Jesuitism has brought to birth, or the sincere belief that has animated some of the most sinister figures in the gallery of its distinguished men.

Out of the closing years of the fifteenth century, the strange figure of Inigo Lopez de Recalde, of the house of Loyola y Oñaz, emerges from the obscurity of Loyola in the province of Guipuzcoa, to throw a bright light upon his own generation, and an ugly glow over the succeeding centuries. Of his boyhood there is nothing important to record—his family was honourable rather than distinguished. He was the youngest of thirteen children, and his father had sufficient influence to secure him a place among the pages of Ferdinand and Isabella. He passed from this service to that of the Duke of Nagera, with whom he stayed till he was twenty-six years of age. He saw war and lived the life of young men of his

age and circumstance, though in the light of latter day reflection he probably regarded himself as more than ordinarily sinful. We have seen how throughout the flamboyant years of the Renaissance the change from extreme licentiousness to inordinate piety was not uncommon, and that this conversion was often the instant fruit of a simple deed, a chance conversation, or an unexpected sermon. Salvation with Loyola was the fruit of the chance of war. At the age of thirty, while taking part in the defence of Pampeluna, which was besieged by André de Foix, he was struck by a cannon-ball and lamed for life. In the following days of enforced inactivity he read a life of Christ and a collection of stories of the saints. It is idle, perhaps, to speculate upon the material that went to the making of either, but the moment was propitious—all hopes of an active future in the field of war had passed, he saw his old career on the eve of extinction and resolved to make a new and more honourable one. Out of the season of pain and sickness visions were born; like most of the dissolute converts of his age, he saw himself the object of the loving regard of the highest powers. It is curious to remember that Cellini in Italy was receiving similar assurance about the same time. As soon as he was able, Loyola made a journey to the Benedictine Abbey of Monte Serrato, and there, some ten months after the mischance that had turned the current of his life, he made confession and received the Holy Eucharist. Then for a while he lived in the Dominican House of Manresa, where, he says, he saw visions of the Society he was to establish, and, greatly cheered, he travelled in 1523 to Rome, where he was blessed by Pope Adrian VI. Thereafter came a year of wandering. Venice, Cyprus, and Jaffa led to Jerusalem, the Mecca of his pilgrimage, and he returned to Venice, and went from there to Barcelona, where he studied. At the university of Alcalá he added philosophy to Latin, but his work excited the suspicion of the authorities; the Inquisition punished him and said that he must study another four years before he ventured to teach. Later on, at Salamanca, the Dominicans imprisoned him, but not for long, and the year 1528 found him in Paris at the Hospice of St. Jacques. There he continued to study, going to Bruges for his vacations, which he spent with the eminent scholar Juan Luis Vives. We learn that in the year 1530 he visited London. Back in Paris—for there seemed no term to his wandering or his

unrest—he associated himself with six men of spiritual mind, three of these being Diego Laynez, Francis Xavier, and Pierre Lafevre. In the month of August 1534 these seven enthusiasts took a vow of united service in the Church of St. Mary on Montmartre. It was a vow fraught with dreadful significance to generations unborn, it gave birth to a policy of reaction that has been of infinite disservice to humanity.

Paris was now left behind. Loyola was back in Spain in 1535 and in the same year revisited Venice, where he met and quarrelled with Giovanni Pietro Caraffa, who was in the course of time to fill St. Peter's chair and be known as Paul IV. In those days the third Paul ruled at the Vatican, and it was he who in 1537 gave the little company of devotees authority and means to revisit the Holy Land, there to preach the Gospel; while, on the strength of their vows of poverty, he allowed them to be ordained priests. On Christmas day in the year 1538 the founder of the Society of Jesus celebrated Mass for the first time in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. The journey to Jerusalem was not possible, so he returned after a while to Rome to dream more dreams and see more visions.

Now the work began to take shape. The Pope recognised the Society which was proceeding to establish rescue homes, orphanages, and schools, and, in the year that followed, Loyola, turning more and more from worldly matters, devoted himself to the great work of settling the constitution of the Society, and preparing from the embryonic work of Abbot Garcia de Cisneros his famous Book of Spiritual Exercises. Twice he tried to resign his office of General of the Society, for though he had modelled his followers on military lines and bound them by strictest disciplinary tests, his thoughts were never in the direction of worldly honour. He was a man of extraordinary administrative capacity, imbued with genuine faith; witness his letter written in 1553 to the recalcitrant Portuguese Jesuits. In 1556 Cardinal Caraffa ascended the papal throne; in the middle summer of that year Loyola died. He was buried in the Church of Gesu in Rome, beatified by Paul V. in 1609, and canonised by the fifteenth Gregory nineteen years later.

Here is but the chronological sequence of events in a great man's life-story, but they have a certain significance, showing as they do the restless striving of the master mind that called into being a

Society still strong enough to move certain European powers to their undoing, still intolerant enough to hold the land of their founder in comparative darkness, and withal devoted enough to risk life in remote savage parts of the earth, as will be seen from the briefest study of the Jesuit Missions in Paraguay and elsewhere.

The Constitution of the Jesuits, or as they call themselves the 'Clerks Regular of the Society of Jesus,' is a marvel of worldly wisdom, while the spiritual exercises advance far in the wisdom that is not of the world, teaching poverty, chastity, and obedience. In some cases special services as well were required of those who sought admission to the Order, and in all its aspects Jesuitry appears the foe of progress, the force that seeks to stifle new thought, to avoid any form of speculative inquiry. Even in their schools and colleges these limitations prevail, and are in part accountable for the relative sterility of a movement that still holds an appeal to certain types of imagination. In an age when the intellect was taking its most splendid flights, Loyola was able to tell the Coimbra Jesuits that the third and highest grade of obedience was the sacrifice of the intellect, and it is interesting to find that the famous letter embodying this statement came near to being condemned by the Pope.

Outside Spain, where the Jesuits remained undisturbed until the time of Charles III., the movement aroused mistrust. Before Loyola had been beatified, his followers had been banished from France and from Venice. Unfortunately Spain could not endure an Inquisition and a Society of Jesus together, for it is almost needless to say that Loyola's immediate successors permitted the Order to intrigue to the full extent of its capacity, as it does to this day. It is to the discipline, which is searching and severe, and to the devotion of the rank and file, which is constant, that the world owes the strange spectacle in its midst of the force that helped in the sixteenth century to turn Spain from the path of progress and reform, has pursued the same bad service ever since, and finds in the country of its founder one of the last places of refuge against modernity. Whatever the real views of Spain's rulers, Jesuit and Inquisitor were of the greatest service or were so regarded. Many years had to record their lessons before the dwindling influence of what had been a great power, and the failure of men inspired by reaction became revealed to the world at large. With the exception of St.

Francis Xavier, Loyola left no man behind him endowed with an equal measure of administrative genius or intellectual development; and while the influence of the Renaissance was still active in Europe, the greatest achievements of the Brotherhood were seen in their plots against the Huguenots, in the part they played in the Thirty Years' War, in their intrigue against Queen Elizabeth, their share of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the expulsion of Protestants from France. It is a sorry record. For more than a century they were a great power in Portugal, where they helped the Duke of Braganza to reach the throne in 1640, and they blighted Portugal as they had blighted the sister kingdom by her side. In short, they gave the whole Iberian Peninsula an atmosphere in which power of the best kind dwindled, in which superstition and narrow views of life alone could thrive, and by the time the Marquis of Pombal and King Charles III. drove them from Portugal and Spain respectively, the two kingdoms had been stricken past recovery. These expulsions take us beyond the period of the Renaissance, and it is not within the province of this chapter to follow further the mixed fortunes of the Clerks Regular, but for whom the charge that civilisation ends at the Pyrenees had never been made.

Miguel de Cervantes de Saavedra, who 'laughed Spain's chivalry away,' is perhaps the one legitimate child of the Spanish Renaissance. His life, no less than his masterpiece *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, sets out for us a vivid picture of Spain in the latter half of the sixteenth century, when, though Loyola and Torquemada were dead, their work was beginning to bear fruit. The mood of Spain's one epic is profoundly mournful, the life of its author was shrouded in gloom, but the interest in each is all-absorbing and lighted with an infinity of humour. And in the study of either, one comes very near to the heart of the country. Thus we are able to see the condition of life and thought that the Renaissance found in the extreme west of Europe. Mrs. Oliphant, in her Life of Cervantes, which has hardly aged in more than thirty years, says that as Dante sums up all Italy to the distant spectator, Cervantes is the one great representative of Spain. . . . 'He is not so much a dominating genius in his country as an impersonation of the country itself, the nature and humours, the temperament, the wisdom and

the follies, the genial homely wit and the high flown sentiment of it, at every point a revelation.'

There is in the best and most deservedly known work of great writers some reflection of the conditions to which they were born, and it is easy to see that a measure of Cervantes's sympathy with the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance was due to a close familiarity with the knight's difficulties. The family of Saavedra was poor and of honourable stock. Tolerably educated, surrounded by poverty, uncomplaining, gentle, given to a measure of display which, if properly understood, is far removed from vulgarity, faithful to high ideals though not always well versed in their practice, there are thousands of Spaniards to-day who live as Cervantes did, too poor to trade, unable in the piping times of peace to 'trail the puissant pike,' constitutionally ill-adapted to business and yet unable to live in comfort without it.

Cervantes as a young man was a simple soul, fond of the rural life, content with humble surroundings, a lover of books, of plays, of poetry. That he had an early taste for writing is shown by his verses contributed to an account of the death of Queen Isabella, and published in Madrid. The verses brought him under the notice of Monsignor Aquaviva, who had come from Rome on a domestic and political mission, and took the young writer back with him, through Spain and Italy. This little incident breathes the Renaissance, the time in which great men were always seeking to surround themselves with artists, poets, philosophers, and scholars, the season when he who had a distinct talent might hope to develop it with a measure of security.

A few years later Cervantes was serving under the banner of one Diego of Urbina in the war of the Allies (Spain, Venice, and the Papal States) against the Turks, who had so lately captured Cyprus. Fever-stricken, he took part in the famous sea fight of Lepanto, to emerge with great honour and a shattered left hand. For six months he lay in hospital in Messina, while the League of the Allies broke up and the Turks recovered from their defeat. On the fatal day when he started from Naples to return to his native land, armed with his honourable wounds and letters of recommendation to the King (Philip II.), just seven years had passed since he left Madrid. A squadron of pirate ships from the Barbary coast intercepted the

vessel that carried him and other war-worn heroes of Lepanto, a brief unavailing struggle resulted, they were overpowered and conveyed to Algiers. Cervantes's brother was captured with him, and together they became the slaves of a Greek renegade. By dint of great sacrifices their father raised a sum of money that sufficed to free the brother. An extraordinary plan of escape, baffled by mischance, lies outside the scope of this brief note, but it revealed Cervantes as a man of unflinching courage and resource. He found time, despite his many duties and anxieties, to organise entertainments for his fellow-captives. Once again he planned escape, once again his plans were betrayed, this time by a Dominican friar, and he was imprisoned and threatened with deportation to Constantinople. Only when he had endured captivity for five and a half years was a ransom of five hundred ducats accepted by his master, and raised with infinite difficulty in Spain and Algiers by the Redemptorist Father Juan. Cervantes drew up a record of his life in captivity to prove to the world that his name was unstained. In this act the Hidalgo stands revealed. He returned to Spain to find that the old desire to fight the Turk had given place to the desire to fight heretics. Spain was already in the grip of Torquemada's apostles.

The memory of his captivity never left Cervantes; it is the subject of the two plays he produced soon after his return to Spain, and it recurs in all his work. But there is no touch of self-pity here. He did but seek to rouse his countrymen to put an end to the long drawn-out tragedy of the Barbary coast, and he strove in vain. He took life and Spain seriously, he had visions of high endeavour that would remove world abuses, and it was to the disillusion that came when he found how trivial was the spirit of his countrymen that we owe *Don Quixote*. One by one he had discarded hopes and beliefs, until he saw with clear eyes that the age of chivalry had passed. We may perhaps doubt whether it ever existed outside the imagination of romancers, but to Cervantes it was something that had been. He had returned to Spain to find his father dead and himself forgotten; he alone remembered Lepanto. There was nothing for an 'old soldado' but further employment in the King's wars. He fought without promotion, though doubtless not without honour. His duties took him to Portugal, where he fell in love with the beautiful country and with the unnamed lady who became the mother of his

daughter Isabella. It was the solitary season of great happiness; he began the never-ending romance *Galatea*, at which we may smile but must needs smile kindly, for though there was something iconoclastic in his attitude to the tales of chivalry, Cervantes was ever a knight-errant. Of the romance that brightened and enriched his strenuous life we know nothing, save that it was short-lived. At the close of the year 1584 he married a Spanish lady, whose greatest treasure was the *sangre azul*. There were in addition to this a few vineyards, the produce of which helped the many lost comedies to keep the pair in ease if not in comfort for a time, and there were one or two small official appointments of uncertain tenure, the more important being in the commissariat department that was victualling the great Armada.

He left Esquivias, the home of his wife, for Seville, where his position must have grown unsatisfactory, for in 1590 we find him appealing, in vain, to Philip II. for a better post. Some four years later a post was found; there was an irregularity in the accounts for which he was responsible, and Cervantes, a man of stainless honour, was undoubtedly cast into prison and reduced to dire extremes. But he was as strong as Job in the hour of his misfortunes, and we may look in vain through such work of his as remains to us for one bitter word or one hard reflection.

In this prison—we have no precise knowledge of it—*Don Quixote de la Mancha* first saw the light. Cervantes had learned by heart the trials and troubles, the comedy and the tragedy of the road, he had met all sorts and conditions of men in the King's ill-requited service, and he gave us the truth that speaks quite clearly even to those who cannot confirm it with the aid of experience. As a picture of rural life in Spain, *Don Quixote* stands alone, quite apart from the qualities that have made it an enduring book. Cervantes never again approached the same high level. By the side of his masterpiece the stories known in England under the title of *Exemplary Novels* are quite poor things. There is never a moment in which we are allowed to feel that what is best in the author is finding its true expression. The stories are clearly written to please, and it is their author's pride that no touch of the coarseness common to the age disfigures them. They are a tribute to physical rather than mental or moral excellence; the persecuted heroines who recover the

husbands that have been lost, or have deserted them, invariably retain their physical attractions throughout the years, in the wonderful land of Cervantes's creation, and owe their ultimate happiness to that fact. It is their simple ingenuity, the kindly feeling of the author, the tolerance of his outlook, that give the *Exemplary Novels* their little fashion even to-day. That Cervantes could write such stories, that he could enter into the romance of life, that he could touch the follies surrounding him with so light a hand, is surely a tribute as much to the years in which he lived as to his own delightful temperament. But his vital contribution to the Renaissance is the wonderful description of his times and his people in *Don Quixote*; he is the mirror through which we see not only Spain of his own time but in no inconsiderable measure the Spain of ours.

Valladolid received Cervantes and six or seven female relatives or dependants in the year 1603, and there, in part of a poor suburban house, the women occupied themselves with needlework, while he kept their accounts and gave his leisure to the completion of the first part of *Don Quixote*. This book was printed, and Cervantes found himself famous; he had pleased thousands and had offended only the few whose extravagances were the subject of his honest mirth. So great was the interest taken in the first book, and so keen the anticipation of its successor, that one 'Avellaneda'—the name is an assumed one, and the authorship obscure—published what purported to be the second part, and wrote a preface that attacked Cervantes in cruel fashion. The attempt to rob the author of his well-won laurels failed, and Cervantes comments upon it with his usual kindly moderation. The coarseness of 'Avellaneda' was impossible to that grave character.

It is his reward that after three hundred years, when we have the full treasure of the Renaissance literature to choose from, the appeal of *Don Quixote* remains irresistible. Other great men are a part of the life of their time; Cervantes, like Rabelais, was able to stand outside it, to see the tragi-comedy as a whole, to capture its protean aspects, and to give us a picture of the times that ranks with Cellini's autobiography in power, and is withal informed by qualities that the great goldsmith never knew.

It will afford no surprise to the student of Spanish history to learn that Cervantes reaped little material benefit from *Don Quixote*.

He was a man of no account; Lope de Vega, the darling of the hour, could afford to sneer at him, though the sneer was not perhaps intended to hurt and was short-lived. Even when the Conde de Lemos, appointed viceroy of Naples, gathered a band of Spanish poets to accompany him, Cervantes, to whom the count had hitherto been a friend, was left out. Cervantes had dedicated books to him in plenty, and the disappointment was not a small one, but the *Viage del Parnasse*, which records it, is not a bitter satire, only a humorous one. This was published in 1614, and the second part of *Don Quixote* appeared in the following year. The romance *Persiles* was all that was left to complete; it takes the reader to Iceland and Friesland on the way to more delightful shores. His art could carry him even in those last days to realms beyond the reach of the troubles that had clung so closely to him through the years. On the 16th April 1616 he dedicated *Persiles* to the Conde de Lemos, and a week later the painful pilgrimage of life came to its appointed end. He was buried in the ground attached to the Franciscan Convent of the Trinity, where his love child had taken the vows, and they say that his body was removed from its grave when the sisterhood left. So lived he and so died, seemingly quite without knowledge that he was among the immortals, and that, when the Spanish contribution to the Renaissance—one might say to the world—came to be estimated by generations unborn, he would take a higher place than Popes and Emperors. There is not in the history of literature a name that inspires a deeper affection, there is no man to whom the student of sixteenth-century Europe turns with keener pleasure or more sincere regard. Few of those who make Renaissance history were good as well as great, or have the power to compel love in equal measure with admiration.

It will be urged by many lovers of the stage that Spain's contribution to dramatic art in the years of the Renaissance is not lightly to be passed by. They will refer very properly to men like Lope de Vega and Calderon, to say nothing of the lesser lights who, in the words of G. H. Lewes, a critic of the first rank, 'had the honour of supplying Europe with plots, incidents, and situations.' This is strictly true, but it may be urged that this contribution is not of the highest order or even of permanent value; it may even

be suggested that Church rule, invasive and intolerant, reduced Spanish drama to something little better than a mass of 'plots, incidents, and situations.' Characterisation was never a strong point, but there is no reason to believe that, had the times favoured such a development, it would not have been forthcoming. The Church was intent upon the amusement of the people, because it wished them to have a plentiful supply of recreation and to leave serious thinking to their rulers. Consequently, plot became the first and last aim of the dramatist; the figures he sets upon the stage are puppets doing obvious things without deep thought or close reasoning, they do not stand upon a much higher plane than the figures in twentieth-century musical comedies, which are designed to amuse but are not worth a moment's serious consideration.

The passions of the men and women in Spanish drama are, with a few exceptions, feigned rather than real; they result in conventional fashion from actions that play little part in life outside the stage. The force that vitalises the drama of Calderon and Lope de Vega is to be found in the romance of life; but filtered through the imagination of the dramatist, this romance loses its reality, while to make the matter worse the dramatist inflicted upon his audience a mass of rhetoric that seems to endow the Spanish playgoer of old time with a gift of patience to which his descendants at least are strangers. Cervantes has his tiresome passages, but it is possible to skip them; the dramatists, on the other hand, must have compelled their audience to endure all. It is not unlikely that the flowing periods, so full of expressions of virtue, even from the lips of ruffians, were written with one eye upon the Church, for a villain would have been unendurable if he had not been devout. In short, all the rules of good behaviour had to be noted—modern thought of the kind that was burgeoning in less fruitful climes found no expression among the Spanish playwrights. Religion and climate played a large part in the production of Spanish drama, and the latter helped the former, for the quality of thought is always highest in countries where the climatic conditions are unkind, though it is easily possible to make too much of this point. The slow descent of Spanish drama, in the long years when men were concerned merely with adapting or paraphrasing the old masters, is probably due to the ruin that Church rule and fanaticism had brought about; but in the flowering

time of Europe, when modernity was springing phœnix-like from mediævalism, there was such a burst of dramatic energy in Spain that it seems reasonable to charge the Church with having helped to pervert it. Compare the drama of the times of Shakespeare and Marlowe, Beaumont and Fletcher and Bacon with that of Calderon and Lope, and we shall see that while the Englishmen were not averse from borrowing some of their raw material from Spain, they could transmute the lead to gold. We are accustomed to regard the Latin races as being naturally and inevitably frivolous, and there was some justification for this belief until the development of the industrial east took place within the memory of middle-aged men. Since then Spain has come into line with the rest of Europe, has produced novelists, dramatists, and musicians who are thinkers and are leaving their mark upon the annals of their time. But the climatic conditions of Spain are as they were when Cervantes was travelling along the remote byways and turning his keen eye and graphic pen to best account: it is the religious atmosphere that is changing.

All the stage figures of the great Spanish dramatists—and let us admit that some were great despite their shortcomings—are painted in primary colours. There is light and there is darkness of the kind familiar to the patrons of crude melodrama in our own country, and there is comic relief which is seldom so banal as ours. The result is that the figures seem as though they had all been cast in a restricted series of moulds, and were differentiated only by means of their names and their dresses. The dramatist's skill consisted very largely in the dexterity with which he invents for his puppets appropriate situations and tiresome rhetorical outbursts. How these checks upon the legitimate action of the drama could be tolerated by an audience, and praised highly by erudite and conscientious critics, must ever be a puzzle to those who have devoted even a little time to the study of Lope de Vega. The latter, who was born in 1562, and Calderon, who was born in 1600 when his great countryman had achieved fame, will compare in the best of their dramas with the representative work of Englishmen who flourished about the same time.

The Church view of morals has a curiously disturbing effect upon the reader of a sixteenth-century Spanish play, for the 'power to

bind and to loose ' works in oddest fashion and one utterly subversive of our idea of morality. Many a hero of Spanish drama is a man who would suffer the extreme penalty of our penal code, but because he has made peace with the Church he is beyond reproach, and because he has certain virtues associated with the age of chivalry he commands the suffrages of his public. Here, surely, we see the hand of the ecclesiast demonstrating to the people, through the medium of the dramatist, that the Church is above the law? This aspect of Renaissance drama in Spain is of the greatest importance in helping to establish the case against the Church, and enabling us to see why the Renaissance failed to do justice to itself between the Pyrenees and the Mediterranean. Obedience was of more importance to the authorities than morality. For the robber, the murderer, and the adulterer there is forgiveness if he believe; but for the man of the far less offensive character who has doubts there is eternal punishment. It may be said that the dramatists were free to choose their plots, and were safe to put forward any ideas they possessed, but this is not the case. Prison and severe punishment would have been the fate of all concerned in the production of a play that did not subscribe to the views of the ecclesiastical authorities; the dramatist's dish had to be compounded of certain materials, he was master only of the proportions and the seasoning. If any of the playwrights had higher aspirations, if they felt the numbing influence of bigoted authority, they were careful to keep their thoughts to themselves; they are not on record. There was a great opportunity for the dramatists; while Church and State were working in unison to destroy the new thought that had passed so suddenly from birth to manhood, it was necessary that the people should be kept amused.

The drama helped to this end, and the tension was further lightened by the wars that took robust manhood beyond the country's boundaries and by the emigration to the El Dorados oversea. A world-Empire enforcing the true faith upon all humanity was the dream of the Spanish administrator, and in the work of realising this dream he did not shrink from sending his countrymen to foreign shores, when he had driven the Moors and the Jews beyond his boundaries. The work went on for generations: it started in the early season of the Renaissance, and continued after the hopes of the great Armada had been frustrated. That Spain, free from

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, BY MURILLO

(From the Louvre, Paris)

This greatly admired canvas is one of the painter's many studies of a familiar subject. There are more than a dozen pictures of the Immaculate Conception whose authenticity is undisputed, and there are many others on offer in Spain, clever and sometimes old imitations of the master's mannerisms.

ecclesiastical domination, might not only have assumed but might have kept the hegemony of Europe is strongly suggested by history, and when we turn to the Spanish stage we see, if only in miniature, the forces that turned awry the current of her enterprise.

Of the two great dramatists, Lope de Vega stands first—he was the master and Calderon the pupil. The master's output has been variously estimated; it stands anywhere above five hundred plays, and in his day he achieved a measure of fame that Shakespeare never knew. He was the master of many styles, he had both wit and humour, he could satisfy all sorts and conditions of men. He was a good liver—one of his last utterances was to the effect that he would surrender all the applause he had received if he might have placed one more meritorious deed to his credit. The funeral ceremonies lasted nine days, and a part of Europe mourned with Spain. Calderon, who lived eighty-one years, took religious orders thirty years before he died, and was the author of more than one hundred three-act comedies, some of which are regarded as classics to this day. He was entirely under the influence of the Church, and is in all things its defender. For a long time after his death it was considered a species of literary blasphemy to criticise him harshly, but in the light of modern times the fetters that he fastened upon his own high talent are all too clearly seen. Spaniards are more proud of his fame than of his works, and modern thinkers tend to the belief that, while he touched many great problems, he failed uniformly to solve them. Of Lope de Vega's limitations the cause may be open to doubt, of Calderon's the reason is summed up by Sismondi, who calls him 'the true poet of the Inquisition,' a dreadful tribute, though one to which Calderon himself might have taken no exception, for he appears to have been sincere in his beliefs.

The modern view of Spanish drama is not likely to be modified even though it tends to deal harshly with long-established reputations. The success of the dramatists consisted in giving the public what they wanted and raising the stage above the level that obtained in the old bad days of the 'juegos de escarnios' and the 'autos sacramentales,' which were the offensive forerunners of the legitimate drama. It is reasonable that those who gave what was required of them, and adorned their work with a thousand ornaments, should be praised in life and over-praised after, the more so because they

had provided a well-nigh inexhaustible store of material for their successors at home and abroad. We must remember, too, that while their gifts were their own, their limitations were in a large measure imposed upon them. But when every allowance that justice can demand has been made, the measure of their achievement is seen to be far less than is popularly supposed. They were the product of a time that was fertile in genius, but they were born in an environment that was fatal to its proper expression. A Shakespeare born subject, for example, to Philip II. of Spain must have failed to express himself to any generation save his own and the one or two immediately succeeding.

Velasquez is for all time, but then he was hardly for his own. Murillo was for his own, but in ever decreasing measure for ours. We may turn for a moment to consider Spain's contribution to painting, for there is no purpose to serve in dealing with incidents in the lives of the Spanish dramatists. Lope de Vega's biographers threw no light upon his attitude to great mental problems, and Calderon's life, of which very little is known, was devoted to the army, the stage, and the religious house. We know just enough to understand why his fame is waning even in his own country.

It is not necessary to our purposes to deal at any length with Spanish art and artists, save so far as they add to our knowledge of the forces that directed the one and the patrons who supported the other.

Four names cover the years with which this chapter is concerned —they are Ribera, El Greco, Velasquez, and Murillo. Only the last-named achieved popularity during his lifetime, and that the Spanish public is faithful to its love is shown by the fact that to this hour a term of praise for a masterpiece of any sort is 'Murillo.' To say 'That is a Murillo' is to say that the object referred to is, of its kind, perfect. This is striking if not high criticism by people who will sometimes tell you that Murillo was a divine gift to Spain in return for the work done by Philip IV. in persuading Pope Paul V. to issue the edict proclaiming the Immaculacy of the Mother of Christ. This matter, indeed, is well-nigh past dispute even by atheists, for, as they remind you, Murillo was born in the year of the Edict. If Calderon is the poet of the Inquisition, Ribera

is its true artist; his canvases are almost uniformly depressing. Suffering of all kind is his theme, gloom and despair are the dominant expression of his subjects. To the ignorant and superstitious such works were a perpetual sermon in days when hell yawned beneath man's feet, and the head of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, who held the Keys, punished as the greatest offence imaginable any doubts about his right or power to use them. Here, then, we have one side of the Church's teaching made manifest. Turn to the canvases of El Greco, the Greek painter Domenico Theotocopoulos, who lived so long in Spain, and we catch a glimpse of the aristocracy and higher clergy of his day, an invaluable legacy. Dignity, narrow aims, fanaticism, and personal splendour are the notes sounded; we see some of the wreckers of Spain in their habit as they lived. It is impossible to avoid the belief that certain at least of these men might have done the state great service under favourable conditions, and one notes, too, a marked suggestion of asceticism that might have passed from body to mind.

Many of El Greco's sitters were men profoundly conscious that they were playing a part, but it was played in obedience to those who spoke in the name of the Deity. One turns with something akin to despair from the haunting horror of Ribera and the infinite narrowness of Greco's subjects, and finds in the work of Velasquez a further confirmation of the theories that the earlier masters have established. For Velasquez was a court painter, though in the days of Philip IV. this did not count for much. His friendship with the famous Count Olivares, who had been governor of the Alcazar in Seville, was the starting-point of his career, and to him he owed his introduction to Philip IV., who gave him the court appointment at a salary of about nine pounds a year. So completely had the Church taken Art under her control, that portrait-painting was considered to lie a little outside the proper scope of God-fearing men. It was an artist's duty, in the estimation of many, to offer up his talent upon the altar of Annunciations, Crucifixions, Ascensions, Assumptions, and the rest. The goodwill of Philip IV. provided other appointments for Velasquez, and it is not improbable that we owe some of his work as a portrait-painter to the influence of El Greco, who died in 1614. Nothing but love of his art could have kept Velasquez faithful to it in years when he was forced to labour as an inspector of buildings, or master of

ceremonies, or marshal of the palace to one of the most dull and dismal courts that ever the sun shone upon. Philip, and Mariana of Austria, his second wife, have more to tell us, through the medium of their portraits, of the failure of the Renaissance in Spain than all that has been written on the subject. Velasquez has set them before us, and there is no need to add to his description. The taste that kept dwarfs at court, the custom that rendered liable to the death-penalty any one who touched the Queen, even by accident, are easily understood. Just as Cervantes gives us Spain of the highways and byways, and paints his contemporaries with a living pen, so Velasquez gives living pictures of the Spanish court, and shows us the people upon whom the rank and file of Spain were not privileged to look. By the side of *Don Quixote* and the Velasquez pictures the dramatist's contribution to an understanding of Spain in Renaissance times is almost insignificant. Murillo reveals the moods of the people, their simplicity, their devotion, their sentimentality. He, like the Florentine Dolci, his contemporary, deals largely with cardinal virtues. His delightful studies of children—perhaps his best work—are of no importance here, but his ill-requited and cheerful labours on behalf of religious houses and hospitals, his own strong belief in doctrine, and his pure simple life were of infinite value to the Church. He must have come as a revelation to the Sevillans when he drew the Virgin and the infant Christ from Heaven to earth, and gave beauty in place of ugliness and hope in place of fear. That the people were full of delight and gratitude is not surprising; before Murillo, religion in art had been largely filled with sorrow, pain, and ugliness. He was the last of the Spanish painters who knew Spain as a great power, and his influence, wholly humanising, could not have been quite pleasing to some at least of the authorities. As a contribution to the art of the Renaissance, Murillo's pictures come too late to need consideration, and their limitations in any case are obvious enough, but we may at least learn from his popularity the state of mind to which Spain had been reduced. While other countries were developing beauty in all directions, Spain's claims were limited to what the Moors had left her, and her earlier pictorial art was merely pathological. Her two great painters, El Greco and Velasquez, were not recognised in their lifetime, and it was left to the nineteenth century to establish their

reputation. We see, in fact, that all the manifestations of the spirit of man were repressed and despised in a Spain where Jesuit and Inquisitor reigned supreme, and yet curiously enough there was a great mental upheaval synchronising, however roughly, with the movement in other parts of Europe. The whole story of the ruin wrought by Torquemada and Ignatius Loyola, so briefly touched upon here, is worthy the closest study, and in some aspects has yet to be told. It may be that many who are living to-day will see a revival in Spain, for there is reason to believe that the evil forces so long drawn out are nearly spent, and in the New Renaissance upon whose threshold we are standing there is reason to hope and believe that Spain will play a worthy part.

CHAPTER XXV

THE NAVIGATORS

ITALY, which remains supreme in the reawakening of the intellect as far as literature is concerned, has to yield the palm to other nations, when we come to consider that other—the physical—widening of the human horizon—the discovery of the world. Down to the beginning of the fourteenth century, the known world centred round the shores of the Mediterranean, and the East was only dimly known from the hints of Ptolemy, and the later, more explicit travels of Marco Polo. That adventurous Venetian, fired by the stories of his father Nicolo and his uncle Mafeo, who had traded in the East, set out with his father and uncle in the year 1265, to visit the court of Kubla Khan. After a journey of three years and a half, they reached Peking, and Marco was enrolled among the attendants of the Grand Khan. Marco was sent on many diplomatic missions in the service of the Khan, observing carefully all the countries he visited, and making particular inquiries about places to which he could not go. When he returned to Europe, he possessed a geographical knowledge that was unique. No man living knew more about the world than Marco Polo. He was taken prisoner by the Genoese, and during his captivity he dictated the story of his travels. Despite his great knowledge, however, the world beyond the shores of the Mediterranean, the pillars of Hercules, points in Northern Europe somewhere in the latitude of the Baltic and in Asia in the latitude of the Sea of Azov, remained a dim and unapprehended mystery. The information even of Marco Polo was hazy as to the relation of localities, and the guesses of the cartographers who worked upon his hints contain some strange though by no means surprising dislocations. It was not long after the return of Marco Polo, however, that cartography began to be practised with some approach to scientific accuracy, although the earlier charts followed a convention that seemed to be unquestioned and unbroken down to

the earlier part of the fifteenth century. According to Nordenskjöld, these portolanos, or pilot-charts as they are called, became, as regards the drawing of the West coast of Europe to South of the Elbe, and the North-west coast of Africa, so completely fixed in the pattern of the earliest archetype, that they afterwards kept it to the end of the sixteenth century. For the purposes of convenience Nordenskjöld calls this archetype—now unknown to us except through its descendants—the Normal Portolano. He says it comprised only the outlines of the coasts of Europe, Asia, and Africa that are mapped on portolanos, such as those belonging to Tammar Luxoro and Petrus Visconti, the latter bearing date of 1318.

The last is the famous Upsala Portolano, preserved in the library of the Norwegian University. All these are almost unaltered copies of the original work of the end of the thirteenth century. Additions were being gradually made to keep pace with increasing knowledge of Scandinavia, Iceland, and Greenland, which before the forays of the Normans to the South, were undiscovered countries to the sailors of the Mediterranean. The North, indeed, was spoken of under the vague generality of Ultima Thule, which, as we shall see in one of the most interesting of fifteenth-century charts, is marked as 'Tile.' But despite these additions, the foundation of the maps used by the earlier navigators followed a rigid convention.

Between the return of Marco Polo and the wonderful last decade of the fifteenth century, considerable strides were made in the exploration by land of the Eastern hemisphere, but the most romantic chapter of exploration—that which deals with the work of the pioneer sailors—owes its first lines to the imagination of Prince Henry the Navigator, by whose direction Portugal took the lead in those discoveries which for several generations made her the foremost colonising nation of the world. It is to Prince Henry that we owe a new conception of world travel. Hitherto the pathways of the human race had lain by way of the mountain, the river, the plain, the strait, the lake, and the inland sea. It was Henry's daring imagination that first formed the conception of world-wide ocean travel. We of this age, with our too luxurious and too rapid vessels, can hardly understand what the enstranging sea meant to our forefathers. Still more extraordinary appears the daring of those early sailors when we reflect that they did not know whither they were

going. Yet they had the advantage of us, for their ignorance was more than half the charm of their undertaking. Dim tales of wonder and mystery, some of them gleaned from the ancient geographers, others from the stories of pioneers such as Marco Polo, gave the adventure a background of gorgeous possibility. Strange lands and stranger peoples, signs and wonders, the riches of Golconda, might await the successful mariner. Nowhere is the vague conception of the adventurer more finely summed up than in the speech of Othello.

> 'In my travels' history,
> Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,
> Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads touch heaven,
> It was my hint to speak,—such was my process;
> And of the Cannibals that each other eat,
> The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
> Do grow beneath their shoulders.'

There, in a poetical condensation, we have the attitude of the Mediterranean coast-dweller towards the great unknown. It was written, it is true, by an Englishman of somewhat wider knowledge, for by this time had been produced Sebastian Cabot's famous chart, with the augmentation of the Indies. But the genius of Shakespeare threw him back with unerring truth into the mind of a Mauresco-Venetian traveller of the preceding age.

But to return to Prince Henry. This remarkable man, the grandchild of Edward III. of England, lived the life of a recluse and student. He fixed his study on the bleak Promontory of Sagres at the extreme south-west angle of Europe, and set himself to find the sea-path to the treasure-house of Araby and wealthy Ind. Henry collected the information supplied by ancient geographers, he made himself a master of navigation and cartography, he placed his wealth freely at the disposal of any bold adventurer ready to further his plans. It was towards the west and south that Henry's navigators found their account. In 1434 they succeeded in passing Cape Bogador, and thus opened a way for the discovery of the whole African coast-line. Madeira, which had been already romantically discovered in the time of Prince Henry's grandfather, Edward III., was granted to the Prince by his brother, King Duarte. The actual doubling of Cape Bogador was achieved by Gil Eannes. In

1435 Baldare made thirty leagues beyond the Cape, and eight years later Nuno Tristan reached a point twenty-five miles beyond Cape Blanco. In 1445 Diaz reached the mouth of the Senegal, and the Guinea Coast was named. Forty years later the King of Portugal bore the title of Lord of Guinea, which after 1446 was further opened up. At the same time Spain had not been inactive, and the Canaries had fallen to her lot, while Portugal annexed the Azores. Disputes arose with Spain about Teneriffe and the Grand Canary, and the latter did not finally pass into Spanish hands until 1479, nineteen years after Henry's death. During Prince Henry's later years his two greatest expeditions were those commanded by Cadamosto in 1455 and by Diego Gomez in 1457. Cadamosto reached the Gambia and Lagos, and discovered the Rio Grande. Gomez also made his way to Gambia. Henry died in 1460, but the impulse he had given to exploration was never lost, although it was checked for a time. The discovery of the Cape route to India, and also that of the great western continent, are direct results of Henry's scientific enthusiasm. Between the death of Prince Henry the Navigator and the exploits of Da Gama and Cabral, the discovery of the African coast had been continued by a succession of navigators.

In 1462 Pedro da Cintra reached a point six hundred miles beyond Cadamosto's farthest limits, and discovered Sierra Leone. In 1469 Fernan Gomez opened up trade with the Gold Coast, and fifteen years later Diego Cam discovered the mouth of the Congo. 1486 saw another attempt to penetrate farther to the south. Bartholomew Diaz sailed with two vessels of fifty tons, and reached the Cabo Tormentoso or Cape of Storms, which João II. rechristened the Cape of Good Hope, because it promised the long-sought ocean passage to India. 1487 saw the dispatch of Pedro de Covilham and Affonso de Payva, whose mission was to be the discovery of Prester John's country. Payva died at Cairo, but Covilham, having heard of the Christian ruler of Abyssinia, struck south into the mountains of Ethiopia, and presented to the Nubians the letter with which he had been furnished to Prester John. Covilham was never allowed to return from Abyssinia, where he was kept prisoner till his death. Spain and Portugal were to share between them these two discoveries—the Cape route falling to the credit of the Portuguese—while with Spain remains the highest of all adventures,

the finding of the New World. Here, however, it is well to remember that while the great maritime nations on the western verge of Europe did the work and bore the expense, the brains that commanded the greatest of those expeditions were Italian. Italian too, although in the service of England, was the navigator who first touched the mainland of North America. The great work had been led up to by at least a century and a half of gradual extension, but the overwhelming discoveries, which changed the whole course of human thought and human life, were crowded into little more than a single decade. It was during the last years of the third period of Humanism, the years that saw the greatest glory and death of Lorenzo de' Medici, that those Spanish, Portuguese, and English expeditions sought the far West and the far South, taught the sea route to India, and brought back the first news of that dim Western Continent that had hitherto been the half poetical dream of the fabulist. Portugal had the advantage of finding her greatest navigator in a man of native birth. Vasco da Gama was born in 1460 at Sines, a port in the Province of Alemtejo. He was of noble descent, and in his youth served as a soldier, but turned his attention later to navigation. In those days the profession of soldier and sailor were easily interchangeable, and an admiral held as often a military as a naval command. Gama was chosen by King João of Portugal to make further explorations in the direction of the hated Cape of Storms, which had been reached by Bartholomew Diaz as early as 1487. It was his account that inspired João, but that monarch died before anything further was undertaken, and it was his son Manuel who actually fitted out Da Gama with four vessels manned by one hundred and sixty men. What ocean-voyaging meant in the cockle-shell craft of those days we have lately been able to realise with some vividness from the interesting model of Drake's *Revenge*, which was recently exhibited in London. How the seamen lived, and still more, how they fought in those cramped 'tween-decks, in which a man of middle height cannot stand upright, is an everlasting marvel. The handling of their guns alone must have been a work of extraordinary difficulty, so closely were the pieces ranged side by side, and what with smoke and noise in that confined space, to say nothing of the invading shots of the enemy, the blood, agony, and death—the gun-deck must have been a veritable inferno.

Equally confined were the officers' quarters. But to men smitten with the fascination of the sea, and with the quest of the unknown, such discomforts were things of naught, and their high-hearted enterprise realised for the world the dreams of the student.

Gama was furnished with letters of introduction to any sovereign or potentate whom he was likely to meet, and among these letters was one to the mythical Prester John, who was believed to hold court somewhere in Africa. This belief in Prester John is curiously reflected in the famous 'Richard King' Portolan chart which dates from about the year 1501. In it Prester John is shown seated at a spot not far from Buluwayo. He is represented as having his kingdom immediately south of the Mountains of the Moon, which are placed far below the equator. But although Prester John's precise locality is thus made too remote from Abyssinia, the figure is extraordinarily Abyssinian in its details, even to the form of the crozier, which Prester John holds in his hand. Needless to say it was not given to Vasco da Gama to encounter this figure of romance, but the fact that he was prepared for such a meeting is proof of what hold the legend had taken on the popular mind. Da Gama left Lisbon on the 8th of July 1497, and on the 20th day of November in the same year he rounded the Cape of Storms, ever afterwards to be known as the Cape of Good Hope. The 'Richard King' chart, already referred to, is one of the first, if not the very first, of the Portolans to bear the name Cape Bona Speranza. It also bears traces of Vasco's voyage up the east coast of Africa, and of Cabral's expedition three years later. Gama's last point of call on the East African coast was Melindi, thereafter names cease, and the outline of the coast becomes vague, the reason being that Gama thence shaped his course for India. On the 20th of May 1498 he reached Calicut on the Malabar coast, having been guided across the Indian Ocean by a pilot whom he secured from some English merchants at Melindi. He was received at first favourably by the Zamorine of Calicut—a potentate who appears upon the 'Richard King' chart as a typical Rajah, turbaned and trousered, and sitting cross-legged upon a carpet. Gama founded a factory at Calicut, but incurring the jealousy of Arab merchants, who stirred up the Indians against him, had finally to fight his way out of the harbour.

In spite of this reverse he was favourably impressed with the commercial possibilities of India, and in 1499 he returned to Lisbon with a glowing account of his adventures. King Manuel received him with great honour. Fêtes were held to celebrate his safe return, and Gama himself was raised to the rank of a noble, to which he had already some hereditary pretensions. According to the Royal Proclamation, these honours were paid to Da Gama for the reason that he had brought back, not without severe loss in ships and men, the solution of a great problem which was destined to raise his country to the acme of prosperity. Manuel lost no time in fitting out another fleet, this time of thirty-eight ships, commanded by Pedro Alvarez Cabral or Cabrera, to follow up Da Gama's work in India. This expedition had one unexpected result. Having gone too far westward, Cabral was caught in the south-west currents, and was carried to the coast of Brazil, which he called Terra Sanctae Crucis. Cabral, however, made no stay there, and pushing on to Calicut, arrived in safety and succeeded in establishing a second factory. But once again the Hindoos, instigated by the Arabs, rose and murdered all those whom Cabral had left in charge of his trading station. A punitive expedition was fitted out immediately the news was known in Lisbon. It was at first intended that this should be commanded by Cabral, but Vasco da Gama urgently appealed to the King to be allowed to take the lead, for he felt that it was a matter touching his personal honour. 'Sire,' he said, 'the King of Calicut arrested me and treated me with contumely, and because I did not return to avenge myself of that injury, he has now committed a greater one, on which account I feel in my heart a desire and inclination to go and make great havoc of him.'

Vasco set sail in the early part of 1502, rounded the Cape once more, and on reaching Calicut, bombarded the town, and treated the natives with such severity as for ever to stain his fair name as a man. His atrocities have left an indelible blot upon his character, and no excuse of the temper of the times, no consideration of the brilliancy of his exploits as a navigator, can condone his bombardment of Calicut and the tortures, worse than those of the Inquisition, which he inflicted upon the natives. In our own time we have seen similar brutalities in the Congo and in Putumayo. It seems to be an inexorable condition that native races shall fare hardly at

the hands of the commercial adventurer. Gama, we are told, was very disdainful, ready to anger, and very rash. His proceedings at Calicut seemed to have turned him into something little better than a pirate. He went on to Cochin, doing the utmost harm he could on the way to all that he found at sea. With Cochin and other coast towns he made favourable trade terms, and returned to Lisbon in September 1503, again carrying much treasure. Once more he had a splendid reception; his goods were admitted duty free, and he received the perpetual title of admiral. He was regarded as one of the first men in the kingdom, but it would appear that he was not satisfied. He returned to Evora, where he lived for twenty years in retirement, taking no part in public affairs.

In 1524, however, he was recalled by Manuel's successor, and was requested to take command of another expedition. Things had been going badly in the East, and it was thought that only Vasco da Gama could keep them right. He was appointed Viceroy of India, and set sail to take up his duties in April 1524. September found him in Goa, where he instituted reforms with a strong and wise hand, but he was not to see the end of his labours. On Christmas Eve, 1525, he died at Cochin. Thirteen years later his body was brought home to Portugal, and was buried with great honour at Vidigueira, of which he had been created count at the time of his receiving the Viceroyalty of India. Vasco da Gama won for Portugal her commercial empire. He was her foremost navigator, but he owes a large measure of his fame to the Lusiads of the national poet Camoens. This link between navigator and poet is discussed in the chapter on the Renaissance in Spain. It affords a very curious side-light upon the intellectual development of the extreme west of Europe. Those voyages of Gama and Cabral have left most interesting traces on the 'Richard King' Portolan chart. The coast of Africa, both East and West, is marked with no fewer than one hundred and fifty-five names, of which a large proportion appear for the first time on any map. Delagoa, still a Portuguese possession, appears as Ia de Lagoa. Natal appears as Ter. de Natall, and Soffala is marked by a small castle. It was visited by Sancho de Toar in 1501, when Toar was accompanying Cabral's first expedition. On Gama's expedition of 1502 he too visited Soffala, and established

a trading station there. He did the same at Mozambique, which appears in the 'Richard King' chart as Masenbichi.

While Portugal was thus opening up Africa and the East, Spain had already achieved for herself the greatest glory of the navigator; but unlike Portugal, she could not claim one of her own sons for the hero of that adventure. Once again Italy had produced the imagination that was to lead to the conquest of the other hemisphere. Christobal Colon is the Spanish and Christopherus Columbus the Latin of the names of the Genoese mariner, Cristoforo Colombo, who was born in the great commercial city of north-western Italy about the year 1435. His father is believed to have been a wool-comber, who intended his son for commerce, but the counting-house was not to young Christopher's mind. It is believed that he was for a short time at the university at Pavia, and although he did not stay long there, we know that he was steeped in humane learning, especially that portion of it which inspired the romantic speculations of the voyagers of Italy. At an early age he went to sea, and he was employed while still a very young man to conduct cutting-out expeditions on the coast of Algiers. The fame of the Portuguese navigators and their discoveries brought him at length to Lisbon, and between 1470 and 1484 he sailed several times to Guinea in the Portuguese service. By his marriage to the daughter of Bartholomew Castello, commander of the colony of Porto Santo, Columbus was induced to wait for some time in that island. He had much talk with pilots in the Azores, and from their hints he became confirmed in a project that had yearly been taking a firmer hold on his imagination. By this time it was well known to the world that the world was round, and Columbus therefore conceived that by sailing west there must be another route to India.

From study of Marco Polo and the Imago Mundi of Cardinal Pierre d'Aille, he had learned all that he knew of Aristotle and Strabo. He was obsessed not only by the idea of another route to India, but of a great new continent in the west. From his thirty-ninth year his project had become an *idée fixe*, from which nothing could divert him. But like all pioneers, Columbus had at first to encounter the ridicule or the neglect of those whom he sought to interest in his scheme. Portugal would have none of it. We are tempted to wonder if Columbus would have fared better had Prince

Henry the Navigator still lived. His dream had so much in common with the studious speculations of Henry, that it seems not too extravagant to suppose that Columbus would have found in the royal navigator a supporter who would have secured for Portugal the supreme distinction of world exploration. Be that as it may, a country that was so active in the opening up of Africa and the Indies looked upon all theories of the unknown West as foolish chimeras. In 1484 Columbus, utterly disheartened, left Lisbon, and turned to the Spanish court, where at first he fared no better. Eight long years of toil, disappointment, but indomitable perseverance, at length secured him the hearing that he sought. The record of those years is one of the tragedies of history, not perhaps so much a tragedy for Columbus, whose character was strengthened thereby for his final achievement, but tragic in its grotesque satire on human nature and in its betrayal of the mediæval cloud that still rested upon the Spanish intellect, even in these the very golden years of the revival of learning. The limits of the present essay forbid any detailed account of the ceaseless disappointments and rebuffs which Columbus endured, and of the ridiculous conference of university and ecclesiastical dignitaries, who wagged their heads and solemnly declared that there was no great world in the West. It was, indeed, more than hinted that to entertain such beliefs was heretical. At length, however, Columbus reached the Queen through her confessor, and thus Ferdinand and Isabella were persuaded to become the patrons of the most memorable expedition that ever set sail; since the quest of the *Golden Fleece* itself there had been no such moving adventure.

The territory of the Grand Khan, which marked the farthest Eastern limit of Marco Polo's travels, was the objective at which Columbus aimed on his Western voyage. He even dreamed of converting the Grand Khan to Christianity, and their Catholic majesties supplied him with a letter of introduction to that potentate. The departure of the expedition was delayed by many worries, but finally, on Friday, 3rd August 1492, at eight o'clock in the morning, the *Santa Maria*, commanded by Columbus in person, the *Pinta* under Martin Pinzon, and the *Nina* under Vincente Yanas set sail from Palos, and stood out for the Canary Islands. An abstract of Columbus's own log is still extant. When they were six days out

the *Pinta* lost her rudder, and they had to put in to Teneriffe to refit. On 6th September they sailed from Teneriffe in great haste, having had news that three Portuguese ships were on the look-out for them. On 13th September they noted the variation of the magnetic needle—a new phenomenon to seafarers. On the 15th a wonderful meteor was observed. On the 16th they passed through the Sargasso Sea, and thereafter they experienced the kindliest Atlantic weather, and learned how marvellously seductive that treacherous ocean can be in her softer moods. Those who, in ideal weather, have made the southern course from the Azores know that Columbus's description of his Atlantic weather holds true to this day. They had 'most temperate breezes, the sweetness of the mornings being very delightful, the weather like an Andalusian April, and only the song of the nightingales wanting.' On the 17th the needle again varied, and the men became alarmed and mutinous.

On the 20th disappointment in making their land-fall, which they had predicted from the sight of two pelicans, increased the admiral's difficulties with his crew. But he held them back by sheer diplomacy and strength of will. To keep them in good humour, he kept a double reckoning—one for the crew and one for himself. And so they moved westward until the 11th of October, when the *Pinta* fished up a cane, a log of wood, a stick wrought with iron, and a board, and the *Nina* sighted a stake covered with dog-roses. 'With these signs,' says the navigator, 'all of them breathed and were glad.' At ten o'clock Columbus perceived and pointed out a light ahead, and at two in the morning of Friday, 12th October 1492, Rodrigo da Triana on board the *Nina* reported land. The island which he had made was named by Columbus San Salvador. It is unfortunately impossible to identify it with any certainty. There is, however, a strong probability that it was Watling Island, one of the Bahamas. Columbus landed in great state, bearing the royal banner of Spain. On the shore they gave thanks for their preservation, and the mutineers, weeping, knelt at their commander's feet, and asked pardon for their mistrust of him. Columbus named the island, planted the flag of Spain, and took formal possession of the soil in the name of their Catholic majesties. From this point he went on to a further exploration of the New Indies. He discovered the islands of Santa Maria del Concepcion, Exuma, Isabella, Cuba,

Bohio, the Cuban Archipelago—originally called the Jardin del Rey—Santa Catalina, and Hispaniola, now known as Haiti. There the *Santa Maria* went aground, and had to be abandoned after her cargo had been transferred to the other ships. From the stranded hulk of the *Santa Maria* Columbus built a fort, which he called La Navidad. This he intended to be the nucleus of a factory. He left forty-three Europeans in charge, and, 16th January 1493, having lost sight of the *Pinta* in a storm, he set sail alone in the *Nina*. The return voyage, at the very worst period of the year in the Atlantic, was tedious and hazardous. On 18th February he reached the Azores, where he had trouble with the Portuguese authorities, who refused to recognise his commission, but at last his arguments prevailed, and he was allowed to proceed. On 4th March he dropped anchor in the Tagus, and almost at the same moment the missing *Pinta* hove in sight, 'All well.' If the subordinate officers in the Azores had been troublesome, their sovereign at Lisbon took a different view—he received Columbus with the greatest honour, entertained him for three weeks, and then sped him on his way to the Spanish port of his departure. On 15th March he reached Palos. Thence Columbus proceeded with all speed to Barcelona, where the court was at the moment in residence. Ferdinand and Isabella received him in full state, bade the admiral be seated in their presence, and heard the story of his extraordinary adventure. He had brought back with him specimens of plants and wood, some gold, and, more marvellous than all, natives of the New World. He received the title of Don. He was enrolled among the Grandees of Spain, he had the privilege of riding at the King's bridle. He was presented with a new coat of arms. His family suit—four anchors —was now quartered with the Lion of Castile and Leon and the Royal Castle. The Papal sanction was sought for the acquisition of the new territory, and Alexander VI. issued a Bull confirming to Spain the lands discovered by Columbus.

In order to secure the possession, a much larger expedition was fitted out. With the new fleet sailed twelve missionaries, who were to Christianise the Indians, and the voyagers had strict orders to treat the new subjects of Spain well and lovingly, and to do them all honour—a command sadly stultified in after years by the acts of the Inquisition in the West. The second voyage lasted

from the 25th of September to the 3rd of November 1493, when the adventurers sighted Dominica. On the 22nd they saw Hispaniola again, only to find the fort burned and the garrison dispersed. A new fort was built, forty miles east of Cape Haitien, and this became the nucleus of the settlement of Isabella. But prosperity seemed to have deserted the great explorer. His cold reserve and determination had served him well enough on board ship, and had enabled him to fulfil his life-long aim, but he remained always the dreamer, and therein he failed. He had not the qualities necessary to a successful colonial governor. Selfishness, greed, and dissension were rife among his followers, and although he contrived to hold them together in some sort, and to extend his discoveries among the islands, it was at too great a cost. Worry and anxiety, the strain of constant watchfulness—he says that he once went thirty days without sleep—shattered his health. He fell into a lethargy, lost his memory, and was for a time at the point of death. In the newly founded town of Isabella he lay desperately sick for six months. Misery and discontent brought the colonists to open mutiny, and news that all was not going well reached Spain and alienated the sympathies of the King and Queen. They sent out a special commission of inquiry, which led to bitter strife and recrimination.

In despair Columbus returned home, and reached Cadiz on the 11th of June 1496. His landing was in strange contrast to what had gone before. In the deepest dejection he came ashore, wearing the habit of a Franciscan friar. But the King and Queen received him better than he had hoped, and he asked for a further equipment. This Spain was unable to supply at once, but Columbus was given a grant of land in Hispaniola, was offered a dukedom or a marquisate, and certain revenues from the new territory. He stayed at home two years, and at length the six ships for which he had asked were granted to him, and he set sail once more on 30th May 1498. The voyage was miserable, he was tormented by gout and ophthalmia, but the expedition had one memorable consequence, for he saw the mainland of South America. He did not, however, realise at first that it was a continent. He mistook the promontories for separate islands, and it was only when he discovered the mouth of the Orinoco that he realised that a vast country alone could account for so great a volume of fresh water. Thereafter he

revisited Isabella, where he found new difficulties and new dissensions. At this time Columbus committed one of the cardinal mistakes of his career by instituting the slave trade. His action in sending five shiploads of Indians home to Seville gave deep offence to Isabella, and Ferdinand, who had never been too enthusiastic about his Western Empire, suspended the governor. Matters had, however, in the meantime improved in the colony, and several industries had been profitably established; but all this was thrown into confusion by the arrival of Bobadilla with an order from Ferdinand to take over all arms and fortresses, and to assume the governorship. The situation became so pitiable and impossible, that finally Bobadilla sent Columbus home in irons. The commander of the ship in which Columbus was a prisoner disapproved heartily of such treatment, and would have struck off the fetters, but the old hero refused. 'He would wear them,' he said, 'until their highnesses, by whose order they had been affixed, should remove them, and he would keep them afterwards as relics, and as memorials of the reward of his services.' He kept his word. We learn from his son, Ferdinando, that the fetters hung continually in his father's study. He desired that they should be buried with him, but it is not known whether this was done. When, some eight years ago, the remains of the hero were at length brought back to Spain, we have no word of such grim relics being found in his coffin. But even while he was on his way home, the tide had turned in his favour. He had written a heartbroken and indignant letter to Donna Juana de la Torre, the governess of the Infanta Don Juan. This moved the Queen to tears. Ferdinand and Isabella repudiated Bobadilla, and refused to inquire into his charges. A new governor was appointed—Bobadilla was sent home in disgrace, and a fresh start was made in the administration of the colony.

But the restless spirit of Columbus reached out to new adventures. He dreamed of a passage westward to Portuguese Asia, and he applied for a further outfit, being desirous to serve their highnesses, and particularly the Queen. After the usual delays his wish was granted. He put to sea on 9th May 1502, and on 13th June he discovered the island of Martinique. He had been forbidden to touch at Hispaniola, but one of his ships required repair, and he decided that he must disobey orders. He begged per-

mission to enter, but his request was refused, and he was caught in a dreadful hurricane. He rode it out in safety, but the homeward-bound Spanish fleet, bearing Bobadilla and the richest treasure hitherto sent out from the Indies, was overwhelmed and lost with all hands. In this Ferdinando Colon clearly saw the hand of God avenging his father of his enemies, for Bobadilla and his associates had never been punished by Spain. A month later Columbus sighted the coast of Honduras, and heard from an old Indian that a rich and vast country lay to the westward. This Columbus believed to be the country of the Grand Khan at length, but he found nothing to confirm the rumour. His crew grew mutinous, and clamoured for return. Columbus decided to plant a colony on the river Veragua, from which his descendants afterwards received their title of Duke of Veragua, but he was caught in a storm, which his ill-found ship weathered with difficulty. At last he made an estuary which he named Bethlehem, and finding gold there, he planted the beginnings of a colony, and returned to Spain for supplies. He arrived on 7th September 1504, too ill to go to court, but Diego his son went in his stead. It is curious that one of his many letters to his son should have been carried by Amerigo Vespucci, whose name by an accident was to be given to the new-found continent. In May 1505 Columbus was able to travel on mule-back to the court at Segovia, and thence to Valladolid. He still struggled amid much ill-health to see himself put by his rights, and he believed that he might do his country further signal service. But that dream was never to be fulfilled. Columbus was too broken to undertake more. He did not, however, die impoverished, for he had considerable property to leave. The bitterness of his tragedy was the feeling that he, who had done for the territorial extension of his country and for the extension of geographical knowledge more than any man in any country in the world had ever been able to do, should have fallen under the suspicion and mistrust of his sovereign and his fellow-citizens. Certain provisions of his will give curious proof of the pride of the old sea-dog. He provides that the head of the house is always to sign himself 'The Admiral.'

So died Columbus, but not even in death could his bones rest. He was buried in Valladolid, and afterwards his body was transferred to the Carthusian monastery of Las Cuevas in Seville. Thence,

thirty years later, they were carried across the Atlantic, and interred in the cathedral of San Domingo. In 1795, when the ancient Hispaniola of his discovery was transferred to the French, the body of Columbus was removed in state to Havana. When, after the Spanish-American War of 1898, the island of Cuba passed out of the hands of Spain, the uneasy corpse of Columbus had to move again, and was brought back with every mark of honour to the cathedral of Seville. There surely he will be allowed to rest in perpetuity.

It belonged of right to Columbus that he should have given his name to America, but Columbia remains merely a poetical generalisation for the great Western Continent, used only in a National Song of the United States. It occurs also in the name of a South American Republic, and in a great and fair department of Canada, but therein the true significance of the name is lost. It was one of those ironic accidents of fate, which throw things out of their proper view, that deprived Columbus of his right of naming the New World, and gave the distinction to one whose discoveries were of far less importance, and who was to a great extent an arm-chair navigator.

Amerigo Vespucci, born at Florence on 9th March 1451, was a naval astronomer. At the age of forty-five he was heard of in Seville as the head of a French firm. It was he who fitted out Columbus's third fleet. In 1499 he himself sailed with Ojeda to the North-West, and explored the coast of Venezuela. In 1503 he discovered All Saints Bay, on the coast of Brazil, and sailed southwards as far as Cape Frio. In 1505 he became a naturalised Spaniard, and before his death in 1552 he had risen to the rank of Pilot-Major of Spain. In 1507, at St. Dedia in Lorraine, an inaccurate account of Amerigo Vespucci's travels was published. In it he was represented to have reached the mainland of America in 1497, and it was suggested that his name should be given to the continent. The suggestion, for some reason or other, became popular. It was acted upon, and the name of Amerigo Vespucci is continually in the mouth of men.

The book in question was called the *Cosmographiae Introductio*, and it was written by Martin Waldseemuller, whose scholarly name was Hylacomulus. The four voyages of Vespucci were treated in a Latin Appendix. A year later there appeared the first engraved map with the New World marked, and although the name 'America'

does not occur there, we find it one year later in an anonymous work, *Globus Mundi*, published at Strasburg. Leonardo da Vinci's Map of the World—the probable date of which is 1514—has the name 'America' written across the South American continent. There is, however, one earlier map containing the name—that of Johan de la Cosa, Columbus's own pilot. De la Cosa's chart bears an inscription in the third person, assigning its authorship to that navigator, and giving the date as 1500. That was the year when Vespucci, Ojeda, and De la Cosa were together in the West. De la Cosa made two voyages in that year, for he returned in the month of June, and set out again with Bastidas, in October, to explore the coast of Venezuela. It is believed, and indeed it is almost certain from the evidence, that during the interval between his voyage of 1499 and 1500 and the second voyage of 1500, De la Cosa must have either executed or begun his chart. Cabral's discovery of Brazil can be traced in a large island situated close to the coast of South America, and marked as an island discovered by the Portuguese. Ojeda and De la Cosa sacrificed themselves to their devotion to exploration. In 1508 Ojeda was appointed governor of the coast of South America, from Cabo de la Vela to the Gulf of Darien. At the same time another adventurer, Diego Nicuesa, obtained the government of Veragua, over a territory extending from the Gulf of Darien to the Cape Gracias á Dios. Ojeda, landing at Carthagena in 1510, was attacked and defeated by the natives, and his lieutenant, Johan de la Cosa, was killed. He had attempted to form a settlement on the east coast of the Gulf of Darien, but the natives again fell upon him, and he was forced to return to Hispaniola. There he died in extreme poverty. Nicuesa died at sea.

Before coming to the later Spanish and Portuguese cartographers, we must note what had been done by England during the fateful years of Columbus's discoveries. The time of her great native sea-captains was not quite yet, and her first fame was due to an Italian, Giovanni Caboto, a Venetian who had settled in Bristol in the reign of Henry VII. The Venetian adventurer, whom we now know by the plain and extremely English name of John Cabot, was, like Columbus, inspired with the idea of the unknown. He and his son Sebastian were granted, on 5th March 1496, royal letters patent empowering them to seek unknown land. In 1497 they sailed from

Bristol, and discovered Newfoundland and Labrador. Turning once more to the famous 'Richard King' Portolan chart, we find that it raises a curious question as to the discovery of Labrador. It is marked in the chart as 'Terra Laboratoris,' represented as an island, whereas what is evidently Newfoundland is called the 'Cortereal.' The curious name 'Terra Laboratoris' commemorates Cortereal's having carried off some of the natives as slaves. Hence he described it on his chart as a place where labourers could be obtained.

Cortereal describes his discovery as a coast-line, but in the 'Richard King' chart we have not only the coast-line discovered by Cortereal, but also this larger island in addition. It has been suggested that in the position and outline of this island we have possibly a trace of John Cabot's discovery in 1497, purposely wrongly named on the Portuguese chart. During that 1497 voyage Cabot certainly discovered two islands—a fact well known in Portugal—for Raymondo da Concino mentioned that Cabot discovered two islands, and had a map and globe showing them. His course from Ireland to the north-west would certainly bring him to the island marked 'Terra Laboratoris' on the 'Richard King' chart. The probability is therefore very strong that here we have the discovery of both Cabot and Cortereal. Beyond these facts we know hardly anything of John Cabot. He emerges to make his famous voyage, and thereafter we hear but little about him, but his son Sebastian carried on the fame of the family. For a time he entered the Spanish service, but he returned to England in 1548, and received a pension from Edward VI. in consideration of the good and acceptable services done and to be done. Sebastian Cabot produced the first English chart upon which the New World is marked, and it is probably to that sheet that Shakespeare refers in *Twelfth Night* when he makes Maria say of Malvolio: 'That he does smile his face into more lines than are in the new map with the augmentation of the Indies.' We have, of course, to remember that nearly half a century had elapsed between the publication of Cabot's chart and the writing of *Twelfth Night*, but as times went then there is not the slightest reason why Cabot's map should not be spoken of as the 'New Map' par excellence.

Not only the golden West, the sunny South, and the gorgeous East

had attracted the dreams of mariners, but even the frozen North had claimed a part in those early days of discovery. Arctic exploration may be said to have begun in the time of Alfred the Great, who mentions two voyagers, Wulfstan and Othaere, of whom the latter had gone round the North Cape to Lapland, and we have that wonderful legend, attested by an inscription in Baffin's Bay, of the Vikings, who landed there on Saturday before Ascension week, 1135. And at the same period we have certain traces of the Northmen in England. Cabot's discovery of Newfoundland and Labrador may, however, be accounted the first great step towards the exploration of the North. In 1500 Gaspar Cortereal and his brother made three voyages in the same direction, and reached latitude 60° North. Half a century later Sir Hugh Willoughby, who acted under the direction of Sebastian Cabot, led the way to the North-East passage, saw Nova Zembla, and perished in Lapland. About the same time another voyager, Chancellor, landed near Archangel. Although the next half century takes us somewhat beyond the limits of our period, we may, without irrelevance, glance for a moment at the way in which Polar exploration was carried on until the first decade of the seventeenth century. After Willoughby there was a steady succession of great mariners, who attempted to solve the fascinating problem of the North-East passage, a problem that baulked the skill of the sailor until 1878, when Nordenskjöld accomplished the voyage. Burrowes in 1556, Pet and Jackson in 1580, and Henry Hudson in 1668 stopped at Nova Zembla; but Barentz the Dutchman, in 1596-7, on his third expedition actually wintered there on the North-East coast. In 1607 Hudson attained to 31° 30′ North, near Spitzbergen, but after his day the North-East passage was given up, and remained untried until Nordenskjöld, reopening the question, at length succeeded.

Frequent reference has been made to the more famous maps and charts that have come down to us. The science made very rapid advances during the fifteenth century, and from the existing specimens of charts we can see how it advanced towards becoming an exact science. At the very beginning of the fifteenth century, maps were of the crudest and most fanciful description: there was little or no accurate understanding of the world. The very earliest specimen extant, dating from somewhere about the beginning of the fifteenth

century, if not rather earlier, came into the possession of Cardinal Borgia some years later, and is known as the 'Borgia Map.' It is a bronze planisphere, divided into two compartments, the upper including a hemisphere, with the world surrounded by the ocean. The inscription has to be turned upside down in order to get the north at the top. When this is done, it is easy to trace the relation of the countries to those on a modern map, although the drawing and proportions are sufficiently grotesque. There are curious little pictures, illustrating manners and customs, and quaint Latin legends, of which one of the most curious occurs in the lone Soudan. There the Phœnix sits pensively above its flames, and beneath it is the touching legend 'Phœnix in orbe sola,' a description that has in it all the desolation that one associates with the pelican of the wilderness and the owl that is in the desert. Prince Henry the Navigator was assiduous in the practice of cartography, and founded a school at Xeres under Jayme of Majorca. That island was famous for its cartographers. Another Mallorcan, whose fame was even greater than Jayme's, was Gabriel de Vallsecha, otherwise called Valsequa. He was patronised by the Lauria family, who were great seamen under the kings of Aragon. One member of the family, Don Francesco, for whom Valsequa drew a very famous Portolan in 1447—a chart that is still extant—was a counsellor to Alfonso VI. We possess in all three charts by this cartographer—one is at Venice; another, drawn for Count Montenegro in 1439, is now in Palma, Majorca; and the third, drawn for Francesco de Lauria, was sold in November 1912, at the dispersal of Dr. Hamy's famous collection of Portolan charts.[1] The Palma chart belonged formerly to Amerigo Vespucci, who wrote with his own hand upon the reverse side this Italian sentence, 'For this large geographical chart, Amerigo Vespucci has paid 130 gold ducats.' George Sand, during her residence with Frederic Chopin in Majorca, saw this chart, and had the misfortune to upset a bottle of ink upon it, thus partly obliterating Vespucci's inscription. The cartographer's signature and attestation is as follows:

'Gabriel de vallsecha la affeta en mallorcha ay MCCCCXXXXVII.'

(Gabriel de Vallsecha made it in Majorca the year 1447.)

[1] See the interesting catalogue of these issued by Messrs. Anderson, New York, and Dr. Hamy's works generally.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE ART OF THE RENAISSANCE

WHEN we turn to consider the art of any country, architecture, which is its supreme expression, claims first consideration. But it is impossible to deal at any length with the subject in this chapter, nor is it advisable, for the point we have to note is merely the special relation of architecture to the Renaissance art of Italy. We have but to estimate the influences that shaped men's minds and directed their hands when they built the great monuments by which we know their epoch. And we have to remember that the Renaissance did not come suddenly, that it had its long period of morning twilight, centuries that were, in relation to the day that lay so far beyond them, no more than those hours that the Arabs call 'the False Dawn.' The architecture of the Italian Renaissance is, naturally enough, Roman in origin. It is strongly marked by Byzantine influences; we have the Lombard-Gothic and German influence too, very often local but always strongly marked. The massive splendour of the purely Gothic architecture, the supreme achievements of Northern France, could not thrive upon Italian soil. The Lombard-Gothic comes nearer to it than any other, but still remains afar off, and it is curious to note how the instinct and capacity to raise beautiful buildings declared themselves long before the advent of Humanism and mankind's discovery of itself. Pisa Cathedral, for example, goes back to the eleventh century. The Leaning Tower, the detached Campanili of Venice and elsewhere, have no association in tradition with anything that went before, and as the years moved on towards the full efflorescence of the Renaissance/ the decorative instinct grew stronger and stronger, giving to the cathedrals as they rose the richness of many coloured marbles, the allure of frescoes and bas-relief, the splendour of mosaic and of bronze work that are the wonder of the world to-day. The monuments of old Rome were always in evidence, and though the

vulgar-minded did not hesitate to destroy, there were always men whom these ruins of a mighty past could stimulate to some splendid effort. More than two hundred years after Pisa's Cathedral had risen, Arnolfo del Cambio gave Florence a part of the Palazzo Vecchio a part of its Duomo and the Santa Croce. Brunelleschi finished the Duomo of Florence begun by Arnolfo, and with him we come to that architectural Renaissance which practically rejected all association with the Gothic, and devoted itself to a classicism that the Roman ruins inspired. The highest achievements of Renaissance architecture in Italy were curiously enough associated with the declining years and the downfall of the whole movement.

But this golden age, which may be allotted roughly to the half century following the year 1490, is of extraordinary significance. Hitherto the general tendency had been to lavish beauty upon places of worship, and to be contented with mere strength in the building of the vast establishments that were at once fortress, palace, and home. It was the spirit of the Renaissance that sought to temper strength with beauty; the new thought gave to the fortresses spaciousness and luxury. Builder and decorator strove side by side, and gradually all the arts were summoned to serve the fortress palaces. The gates were of wrought iron or beautifully cast bronze. Frescoes, mosaics, and arabesques were to be seen on all sides, ceilings were painted, tapestries of rare beauty hung from the walls. Gold and silver work abounded. Every Tyrant was a collector, every ruler of a great house was eager to fill his home with things of beauty, and though St. Peter's itself was not completed until 1626, its beginnings go back to the time of Nicholas v., and some of the most beautiful work was accomplished when Julius II. had assumed the Triple Crown. To Brunelleschi, Alberti and Bramante succeeded, and it was Michael Angelo himself who gave St. Peter's its dome; indeed this and the Medici Chapel of San Lorenzo are his undoubted masterpieces. If in the end St. Peter's did not realise the highest hopes of those who were associated with the earliest ages of its construction, it was because the Renaissance movement was dead. It could not endure fetters, even though they were the fetters of classicism. We see, then, that the effect of the Renaissance upon architecture in Italy was many-sided, that it imposed no formulas, gave great liberty of action to architects, and in a

general sense sought to make the arts of painting and sculpture serve all great buildings. The spirit of man was not satisfied with any cold and rigid splendour: it demanded sensuous beauty, light, warmth, colour, and an ever-present reminder of the grandeur associated with the Roman Empire. It is perhaps on this account that architecture could not long survive the Sack of Rome by the Imperialists in 1527, and the year of dire disasters that preceded the establishment of peace in Italy in 1529.

Turning from architecture to sculpture, we find many curious developments associated with the latter art in Renaissance Italy, and it does not take long to discover why it came about that sculpture was forced to yield the pride of place to painting as the supreme expression of the art of the era. Sculpture had, of course, reached the highest point of its achievement in the hands of the Greeks, who had given all their genius to the expression of the physical aspects of life. For them the Godhead had as many shapes as Proteus, but Christianity had destroyed the gods of Greece, and in place of the exquisite embodiments of the Immortals 'the Faith of Christians had attached itself to symbols and material objects little better than fetishes.' In other words, mediæval art had revolted from the Greek ideal, and in place of beauty had produced character, which, though crude in its beginnings, marked the birth-pangs of the psychology which Greek art never knew. At the same time, it is quite apparent that as soon as the moral and spiritual side of life began to claim expression, the question of mere physical beauty as expressed in terms of marble or bronze was relegated to a second place. The development of psychology demanded more than sculpture had to give; the passion and tribulation of Christianity looked to the painter. Tranquil strength, free from any overpowering emotion, is the proper expression of sculpture, for it has all the quality of finality and all the defects of that quality. The gift of three dimensions is its undoing, despite the superlative attainments of Michael Angelo. Even the famous Laocoon was held to transgress the proper boundaries of the sculptor's art, and as under the influence of the revival of learning new emotions were born and thought travelled into spheres hitherto unknown, sculpture fell from its high estate. It remained a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, but was relegated to the tomb. Over the bodies of those

THE LAST JUDGMENT, BY MICHELANGELO

Sistine Chapel, Rome

Photo Anderson

from whom all the passions had departed, sculpture could rear magnificent monuments and express the tranquillity and repose for which there was no place in the strenuous life of the times. The worker had won his goal and sculpture was his requiem. The art was too beautiful to be altogether lost, but it was not sufficiently many-sided to serve the new thoughts and the new aspirations of humanity.

Having disposed of sculpture satisfactorily, and found for it a sphere of expression in which it might excel, the spirit of the Renaissance turned to painting, and made a successful effort so to enlarge its boundaries that it might succeed where sculpture had failed. Hitherto painting had enjoyed the support while suffering from the limitations of the Church. The ecclesiastical hierarchy had decreed that the subject of all paintings was within the proper sphere of its direction. It was for the Church to state the theme, and for the painter to carry out instructions. Now the Renaissance was to enlarge the painter's sphere and carry him beyond the Church, but so little had churchmen grasped the enormous vitality underlying the painter's art, that in Italy at least they did not seek to oppose the new departure. It was the policy of the Church to accept all manifestations of talent and turn them to her own account, but when the Renaissance began to develop the spirit of painting along purely sensuous lines, the ascetic ideal of the Church was roused too late. The world was young, and the contemplation of physical beauty dangerous. Symonds recalls the case of some nuns who petitioned for the removal of the picture of martyred Saint Sebastian, because the beauty of the stricken figure turned them to thoughts that were not entirely devout. The Church did not wish to see heaven brought down to earth, nor the restoration of the gods who had ruled on Olympus, but in the end the exiled Olympians took dramatic vengeance. They came to the canvas of the church-guided painter in the guise of saints and martyrs, and avenged themselves on Christianity by seducing its popes, cardinals, and highly placed devotees. Sculpture had done nothing so dangerous: it was best as a Christian force, and would have attempted in vain to catch the pagan spirit. But painting had wider possibilities, and when the art of the painter was exhausted the modern scale was introduced, and music, as we know it, was born. For many years following

the full tide of the Renaissance, painting seems but a lifeless thing: music had supplanted it.

We come now to the painter's art and the story of its development, and there is one incident in connection with this that, though it precedes the revival of learning and the advent of the spirit of Humanism, has at least as much dramatic significance as the crowning of Petrarch in the Roman Capitol. For this incident we must turn back to the year 1267 and to the city of Florence, and see, if only in the mind's eye, a delighted procession, carrying in triumph to the church of Santa Maria Novella, Cimabue's picture of the Madonna. It was an hour fraught with far greater significance to the human race than any of those who took part in the proceedings could have imagined. The long era of fresco and mosaic was at an end—the marvels of oil painting were dawning. But Cimabue's services to the world of art are not only to be summed up in terms of the delight he gave to those simple thirteenth-century Florentines. According to the story, probably untrue, but of universal currency, Cimabue discovered Giotto, finding him at work in a field, making some charcoal drawings of the sheep he had in charge, and Giotto was undoubtedly the first Humanist of the brush. We find his work in the double Church of Assisi, or perhaps it would be more correct to say that we find his masterpieces there; other fruits of his brush are scattered far and wide. To Giotto belongs the credit of putting an end to that long nightmare of horror imposed upon mediæval painters by the Church. Naturally enough, a very long road remained to be trodden when Giotto had passed away; painters only discovered their full gifts when they had laboured in the workshop of goldsmith and sculptor as they were to do in the May time of the Renaissance. But Giotto may claim that he made it possible to separate genuine devotion from the contemplation of horrors, that he helped in his way to take religion, or a part of it, out of the hands of the clergy. And it is important to remember, before turning to consider the schools of Tuscany, Umbria, and Venice, the reason why the painters' art flourished so triumphantly on Italian soil that we look to the painters of Italy as the men who almost claim the monopoly of great accomplishment in their special line. Italy was never united. Imperialism had no foothold there during the era of the Renaissance, and in place of it the Italians sought their ideals

in the realms of philosophy, literature, and art. Seeing they could not compass a united empire, they endeavoured to make the whole of Europe, as far as they knew it, cosmopolitan, to develop those sides of life that defy state boundaries and transcend all the limits of political ambition. And from the ranks of their world-ambassadors their wandering apostles of culture, the painters, stand out. Any state could raise soldiers, all could raise statesmen of sorts, but when it came to great painters, and more especially to great portrait painters, Italy stood pre-eminent, and the rulers of Europe availed themselves of any chance offered to receive the men who could give them a measure of immortality. This is why the seed sown by Cimabue and Giotto fell upon such fruitful soil and was destined in the fulness of time to produce fruits at which the world still wonders.

The Christian spirit is responsible for the entry of psychology into the realm of art and the consequent development of pictured beauty. The Christ story and the legend of the martyrs called for the expression of emotion, if they were to be rendered adequately, and, in crude fashion at first, but with ever increasing enthusiasm came insight, and the painter learned to express grief, fear, resignation, hope, and the other forces that sway mankind. But it is well to remember that between the earliest untutored strivings to give life to these mental phases and to complete the development achieved by the great masters of the brush, there was a period of several generations. The Gothic movement could have borne full fruit had the records of classic antiquity remained undiscovered.

The remarkable men produced by the Renaissance exhibit a greatness that stands quite apart from morality; some are supremely moral, others immoral or non-moral. They have a great strength whether for good or evil, and we must not forget that the light in which they are regarded in these days is largely tinged by religious or political prejudice. That great friar of the Religion of St. Dominic, Fra Girolamo Savonarola, becomes either a hero or a scoundrel in accordance with the religious beliefs of those who study his history, and the same remark applies to Martin Luther himself. Where no religious questions arise, politics intervene, and Machiavelli, and even his Prince, Cæsar Borgia, find their defenders. Men like Cellini and Pietro Aretino find a certain measure of favour because while the evil that

they did cannot hurt anybody now, we still rely upon what they wrote for much instruction and not a little amusement. Those who stand well removed from controversy, and securely placed in the respect and admiration of all, are men like Michael Angelo and Leonardo da Vinci ; great artists whose religion offended nobody and whose political views concerned only their contemporaries. That the Renaissance brought this goodly company of statesmen, artists, soldiers, poets, men of letters and devotees into existence is not to be denied, because the years that preceded and followed it had no such gift for the world at large. In order faithfully to present the artists, it is best perhaps to group together a few of the most notable figures, and let the story of what they undertook and what they achieved explain, as far as it can, the times they lived in. A survey that endeavours to be comprehensive, even within brief limits, must include good men and bad—those who would shrink from no sacrifice for their ideals, and those who would hesitate at no crime for their own advancement or gratification.

Some twenty miles outside Florence is the little town of Vinci, and in the main street there is a bust of the great Leonardo who has made the town bulk so largely in the history of art that nothing save the fortunate indifference of the Italian Government has kept it from becoming a tourist centre. Just outside the sleepy Tuscan town is the farm-house in which Leonardo is said to have been born—the illegitimate son of a country notary who was afterwards appointed to an official position in Florence. Leonardo was brought up in the house of his grandfather, for his father did not repudiate him, though being a man who married four times and had eleven children, the share of attention he could give to one would naturally be small. It is well to remember that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries illegitimacy was not a serious disadvantage, and books were written to prove that natural children were neither infamous nor incapable of receiving honour. It was even stated by one distinguished writer that Ishmael was not driven from Abraham's house because he was illegitimate, but because of his insolence to Sarah. The Biblical justification for this statement seems to have been lost, but we may remember that Theodoric, King of the Goths, William the Conqueror, the Emperor Charlemagne, to say nothing

of many of the Tyrants of Renaissance days, were bastards, and in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries such a child, made legitimate and recognised by the father, was in no respect inferior to other children begotten in lawful wedlock. Doubtless, the highly developed papal penchant for 'nephews' had something to do with this very tolerant spirit.

At the age of seventeen or thereabout, Leonardo entered the workshop of Andrea del Verrochio, sculptor, artist, and goldsmith, and among his companions would have been Perugino and Botticelli; at the age of twenty he was a member of the Florentine Guild of Painters, and for the next ten years we find him accepting commissions that he did not always execute, painting pictures of which all traces are lost, and making drawings a few of which are still preserved. But during the time that he was known chiefly as an artist, he was developing gifts in quite another direction, and achieving feats of engineering very largely theoretical but showing the quality of insight that is very closely allied to genius, and, generally speaking, proving an innate capacity to turn all the resources of his own time to the fullest use. In or about the year 1482 Leonardo went to Milan in the service of Lodovico Sforza, who married Beatrice d'Este, assuring his employer that he could construct portable bridges, canon, mortars, and other engines of war of a new and admirable design, that he had special engines for sea fights, and that in times of peace he could erect buildings for public purposes, and private palaces. He also tells Lodovico that he can execute sculpture in marble, bronze, or clay, and can paint as well as any other living man. And the curious part of it is that, as far as we are able to learn, these were no idle boasts. It has been well said of him that nothing save his success was equal to his merits.

The scanty records left to us make it difficult to follow Leonardo's career. He is supposed to have left Milan for Africa in 1483, and then to have travelled in eastern Europe in the service of the Sultan of Egypt. It is clear that he returned to Milan in 1487, there to become Lodovico's right-hand man, painter, sculptor, engineer, designer of pageants. There he stayed until 1500, all through the years of Lodovico's married life, and then when the fall of the city, which was sold by Bernardino di Corte to Louis XII., made him seek another place of residence, he went first to Mantua and then to

Florence, drifting thereafter into the service of Cæsar Borgia, and coming later to Florence, Milan, and Rome, where he resided in the Vatican and gave up his time to the study of engineering, geometry, geology, anatomy and other matters equally abstruse, and, in those days, hardly known. In 1516 Francis I. (who, if we may believe Cellini, did not think that any other man had been born into the world with as great a knowledge or as profound a philosophy as Leonardo's) called him to Páris, where he spent the last three years of his life, dying, according to Vasari, in the arms of his royal patron. It is, of course, as an artist that he has most fame, but the most of the pictures that have been attributed to him in years past are claimed to-day by modern criticism as the work of contemporaries who had few of his gifts. For example, the 'Annunciation' in the Uffizi Gallery, the 'Virgin of the Rocks' in the National Gallery, the 'Beatrice d'Este' in the Ambrosiana, the 'Lucrezia Crivelli' in the Louvre, to say nothing of others that could be mentioned, have all been taken away from Leonardo. Against this we have to remember that Leonardo in a certain sense may be said to have foreseen and foretold the classification of animals, magnetic attraction, breech-loading canon, the circulation of the blood, the invention of the paddle-wheel, the laws of gravitation, and the possibilities of steam and flight. In fact, he may be described as a universal genius. Cellini, who, whatever his faults, had mastered 'the noble pleasure of praising,' declared that Leonardo, Michael Angelo, and Raphael were the book of the world. Mr. Corvo, in his fascinating study of the House of Borgia, declares that just as Dante had mastered all there was to know at the beginning of the fourteenth century, so Leonardo had taken all knowledge to be his province at the beginning of the sixteenth, and he refers with just appreciation to his invention of conical bullets, boats with paddle-wheels, flying machines, and the cork apparatus for walking on water. Philosopher, civil and military engineer, mathematician, architect, sculptor and painter, Leonardo had probably no equal among the men of the Renaissance, and in admitting this we have to remember that time, war, and neglect have destroyed no small part of his output, and it is chiefly through the fortunate preservation of his sketch-books that we are enabled to see for ourselves what manner of man he was.

Side by side with Leonardo da Vinci stands Michael Angelo, a man with a different type of mind, but bearing a certain relation to the great Florentine by reason of his devotion to work, the extraordinary quality of his achievement—so much better preserved to us than Leonardo's—by his philosophy which redeemed the trouble of so many years, by his celibate life, and, to some small extent, by the fact that for several years the two men were serving Italy together. For though Leonardo was perhaps twenty-three years old when Michael Angelo was born, his career had nearly half a century to run. There the comparison ends, for while the older man had the best that life could give him, the younger one was compelled to struggle endlessly against conditions that hampered the full flow of self-expression, that forced him to do one work when he would have preferred to do another, and brought all manner of political influences to divert or arrest his career. His gifts were not rounded off by any diplomacy. Of a singularly honest nature, he suffered from the vice of telling the whole truth to his patrons.

Born in 1475 at Caprese, he was given by his mother to be nursed by a stone-cutter's wife, and so, he used to say in after life, his love for the sculptor's art was born. As a lad he was apprenticed to Domenico Ghirlandaio, whose work he soon learned to correct and to criticise, so that his association with the studio was inevitably brief. It was in the gardens of San Marco in Florence that Michael Angelo discovered his own genius, among the many sculptures that Lorenzo de' Medici had placed there, and his first efforts with mallet and chisel were so strangely mature, so highly significant of what was to come, that Lorenzo himself was attracted by them, and took the lad into his service, where he was admitted to hear the vitalising discourse of the great scholars and Humanists who gathered to the most brilliant court of Renaissance times. So it happened that in years when his mind was most responsive and his genius was budding, Michael Angelo was brought into touch with the new movement in its most illuminating aspect. At the same time he came under the spell of that great Dominican, Fra Girolamo Savonarola, whose teaching, which had had such an enormous influence upon Botticelli, may be seen in some of the finest accomplishments of Michael Angelo.

In some respects he was a little after his time. It would have

been so much better for his work had he been able to enjoy the life at the court of Lorenzo the Magnificent for a longer space. But Lorenzo died, and Piero lacked the capacity to carry on his tradition, the Medici power was at an end, and Michael Angelo was forced to leave Florence and go for a while to Bologna. When he was able to return it was but for a little time; some dispute about a commission carried him to the Rome of Pope Alexander VI., where, at the age of twenty-four, he enriched St. Peter's with the magnificent Pietá, a commission from one of the French cardinals. This work enlarged the boundaries of the sculptor's art, and must have made an enormous impression upon those who greeted for the first time a new manifestation of genius.

He returned to Florence and lived through four years in a state of some mental perplexity; the Medici had been his patrons, and their policy was one that roused in him a spirit of uncompromising opposition. The view of life that prevailed in Lorenzo's palace was in direct conflict with the view that Savonarola preached, and for which he died. Michael Angelo, absorbed as he was in his art and sustained as he was by his faith, found it extremely difficult to reconcile the sense of obligation to the family that had enabled him to find himself, with the antagonism to despotic government that had been developed by his study of Dante, his association with the murdered Savonarola, and his sympathy with Pietro Soderini, who was carrying on the great Dominican's tradition, and who opposed the Medici until 1512, when his discretion outweighed his valour. Yet, while Michael Angelo could not identify himself with the policy of the Medici, he accepted their commissions, building the façade of San Lorenzo for Leo X. and finishing the tombs there for Clement VII., on whose decease he left Florence, never to return while Cosimo de' Medici reigned. In Florence he was brought into friendly competition with Leonardo, for each was commissioned by the Signoria to prepare designs for the hall of the newly built council chamber, and though both cartoons are lost we know that Michael Angelo's was a group of soldiers surprised while bathing in the Arno. Shortly afterwards Michael Angelo was called to Rome by the 'Terrible Pontiff,' Julius II., at a time when each of the two men had advanced to a position in which he was almost intolerant of criticism. Julius II., though he was quick to confess himself no

scholar, was none the less the vicegerent of God on earth, and Michael Angelo was no less master of his fate and the servant of his tongue than Julius himself. Each stood alone in the world, and though they might quarrel, and the one might threaten and the other repel threats with contempt, yet there was some bond of sympathy between them, as there must be between those who know they may have rivals but are satisfied that they have no peers. To hold his own mausoleum, which Michael Angelo was to design, a new St. Peter's was to be built for Julius II. But the best laid schemes of men come to nothing. The unfinished 'Bound Captives' and the Moses in the Church of San Pietro in Vincoli are all that stand for the achievement, though there is in the Uffizi collection in Florence a sketch of the whole design. The work should have been the supreme achievement of the Renaissance; but for reasons that remain obscure, Pope Julius allowed himself to let the whole scheme lapse after Michael Angelo had spent the greater part of a year in the Carrara quarries selecting marble that was sent in great blocks to Rome. Greatly disgusted, the artist after several vain attempts to see his patron hurried back to Florence, vowing he would not return to the Pope and would accept a commission from the Sultan of Turkey, but in Florence, Soderini prevailed upon him to renew his relations with the Vatican. Artist and Pope met at Bologna, where after as near an approach to reconciliation as was possible between the two, Michael Angelo undertook to cast a bronze statue of Julius to stand before the door of the Church of St. Petronius in Bologna. A few years later this statue was destroyed and melted down into a cannon.

After this, the requirements of the Pope took another form. He gave up the idea of the mausoleum for good and all, and some say on the advice of Bramante, instructed Michael Angelo to prepare the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. There were many difficulties. The artist did not like his task, and Bramante, who was the Pope's architect, was unable to prepare adequate scaffolding; the first plans had to be altered, but when all these troubles were smoothed over the pace of progress was astonishing. The work began in the autumn of 1508, and lasted four years. The artist seems to have accomplished everything without assistants, other than a boy or two, to have eaten and slept where he worked, to have prepared

his own colours, and in due course to have accomplished his masterpiece, not only from the standpoint of art, but from the standpoint of Christianity. It is at least reasonable to suggest that had there been no Savonarola there could have been no such realisation of the Christian spirit in the Sistine Chapel, in which it is the sculptor and not the painter who triumphs, in spite of the fact that it was a painter's labour. Certainly posterity owes something to the 'Terrible Pontiff,' who brought about the accomplishment of the work. We do not know how the artist regarded this labour of his own hands, but he may have found in the peace that only Pope Julius himself dared to disturb, some atonement for the hard labour, while for mental relaxation he had the work of Dante and Savonarola.

Pope Leo X. and his successor Clement VII. were of the House of Medici, and the latter conceived the idea of building in San Lorenzo at Florence a sacristy that should hold monuments to the greatest members of their house, and it was on work for San Lorenzo that Michael Angelo was engaged from 1516 to 1534 when Clement VII. died, and he could lay aside his task and vow that he would never return to it, despite the persuasions of Cosimo de' Medici, who found the sacristy incomplete. But for all the incompleteness San Lorenzo pays stupenduous tribute to the Renaissance spirit, the figure of 'Dawn' at least shows us the completion of a supreme conception, and in the years when he had cast his commission aside and felt free to quit Florence, he painted for Pope Paul III. the fresco above the high altar of the Sistine Chapel. It is curious to remember that the 'Last Judgment' offended by its nudity such men as Messer Biagio, the Pope's master of the ceremonies, and Messer Pietro Aretino, who had not, as far as can be ascertained, one solitary claim upon the respect of honest men. The former, for his pains, was ruthlessly introduced among the figures of the damned. Following the 'Last Judgment,' which is but a memory of what has been, in the eyes of the present generation, and has even been defaced deliberately, one supreme achievement remained for the sculptor, and that is the dome of St. Peter's, surely an imperishable testimony to his genius! That labour accomplished, he entered upon less strenuous times that were in no way divorced from beauty. Through years that his faith ennobled, he wrote some poems that the world

will not willingly let die and passed 'along the path of kings and emperors.'

Benvenuto Cellini, one of the greatest of the Renaissance goldsmiths, engravers and jewel-workers, and a sculptor of note, has left but few specimens of his superbly beautiful art to the twentieth century. There is, however, enough to justify the claims of his admirers, and there is the autobiography which passed not long after his death into the possession of the Cavalcanti family. After much travel, the original manuscript has found its way to the Biblioteca-Medicea-Lorenziana, and it has been translated into English by Nugent, Roscoe, J. A. Symonds, and Miss Macdonell in the order named. Among the foreign translations is one by Goethe. The reader finds in this strange fragment some of the most graphic descriptions extant of sixteenth-century Rome and Florence, nor is there a work that discusses more frankly the life of the times. Here there is material for a widespread interest, and there are certain aspects of the autobiography that may be said to throw a valuable light upon the psychology of the Italian statesmen and artists of the sixteenth century. We can see how, apart from a certain gross superstition, there was little or nothing that is commonly associated with religion in the lives of men of thought or action. Cellini saw princes and potentates in their habit as they lived; the intimate personal revelations scattered through the pages of the autobiography prove that morals were not on intimate terms with art or statescraft. In the season when Florence and Rome were among the wonders of the civilised world, when Michael Angelo, Titian, and Rafael of Urbino were at work, and the Medici family was still a power, life in many of its aspects was unutterably degraded and art was rising from the mire as an orchid rises from its unsavoury bed. Looking at this aspect of the Renaissance, upon which Cellini's book sheds such a fierce glow, it is possible to understand why there are some who look askance to-day at the manifestations of a great intellectual upheaval, and point to the fact that the most beneficial world movements have been associated with less flamboyant epochs.

Benvenuto entered into life in the year 1500 and died in 1571. A hard worker and a man gifted with extraordinary skill, he lavished upon his art the labours of an enthusiast and the imagination of a

poet. For his father in the earlier years, and for one of his natural children at a later date, he seems to have felt a genuine affection, and when so much has been said, and his devotion to Michael Angelo recorded, the tale of his virtues is told. He was a dissolute liver, and relates some of his exploits in fashion that does not impress the reader with his innocence of the charges, yet more serious, that have been brought against him. He was a man of violent temper and uncontrollable passions. He was a murderer, and it was for lack of opportunity, not through any effort at self-restraint, that the list of his crimes is not longer than it is. And for all this, when he was imprisoned by the Pope and was in grave danger of his life, he had visions in his dungeon of a guardian angel, and declares, with all the solemnity of a nature lapped in superstition, that he saw the 'Glory of God,' and the 'Blessed Peter' pleading for him with the Almighty. If his book were written in good faith, and there is no real reason to suppose otherwise, Cellini did not regard himself as anything worse than an honourable but hasty-tempered man. The stories he sets down are fatal to his reputation to-day, even where he has glossed over the worst aspects of them. One can only remember that the conscience of the sixteenth century was far removed from ours. Had it been otherwise, he might surely have left out many a recital of unredeemed ugliness. It is not that he feared to lie. In the first pages of his autobiography he gives Florence an origin that is quite false, in order that an alleged ancestor of his own may be glorified, and he declares that when but five years old he saw a salamander playing in the middle of the oak log fire in one of the rooms of his father's house. It was sufficient for him to be able to claim that nobody else had ever seen a salamander enjoying the flames—which may be true enough. He adds that his father gave him a sound box on the ear, to fix the remarkable incident in his memory.

At the age of sixteen he was engaged in the first of many brawls. Soon after this, in Florence, he wounded two men very severely, and was condemned to death by the Eight. He declares that he did nobody any harm, and is content to abuse his judges, but Bacci tells the truth of the story which compelled Cellini to flee for his life to Rome, where he attracted the attention of Pope Clement, quarrelled with the Bishop of Salamanca, and lived industriously and disreputably!

THE INFANTE PHILIP PROSPER, BY VELASQUEZ

This picture hangs in the Imperial Gallery of Vienna. It is the work of the painter's last period, and shows us the little son of Philip IV. by his second wife. The lad died some two years after the picture was painted; it has been restored, not too cleverly.

There is no limit to his self-esteem. He says, after talking of his prowess with the gun: 'I also made the finest powder, and discovered marvellous secrets unknown to this day.' He helped Pope Clement in the defence of Rome (1527), and claims, of course, that he shot both the Constable of Bourbon, Charles, cousin of Francis I., and the Prince of Orange. 'Every day was marked by some great feat of mine,' he says, describing the siege. But whatever his marksmanship, he turned it to good account by getting forgiveness from the Pope 'for all homicide in the past or in the future, if committed in the service of the Church Apostolic.'

With the Duke of Mantua, who might have been his patron after the Sack of Rome, he quarrelled; for, he says, 'he had a fever, and when it attacked him he would curse Mantua, its duke, and all who lived in the city when they might live elsewhere!' So we find him travelling back to Rome and doing such wonderful work for Pope and cardinal that they cannot (he tells us) find terms adequate to his praise.

A surgical operation has to be performed upon the daughter of Raffaello del Moro. Cellini promptly makes such delicate instruments that the surgeon is able to cut away the girl's diseased bone without inflicting pain!

One pauses now and again to ask if Cellini himself could have believed the story of his own life as he wrote it, and if he did, whether he was properly responsible for his actions. He had a full share of the blatant defiant spirit of the years, an enormous virility, and a measure of what we recognise to-day as megalomania. We may pause to wonder whether the equipment was not in a great degree what the time required, but we must wonder still more that it should have been associated with so much work of the highest skill and imagination. In addition to being an artist he was a musician, and does not hesitate to assure us that his music was of the kind that enchanted all who had the privilege of hearing it. We cannot measure him by our modern standards, for life does not reproduce the type any longer, even though it be awaiting in the womb of time the advent of another Renaissance.

As one continues to note the hairbreadth incidents that Cellini has set down, a pregnant sentence by John Addington Symonds returns again and again to the memory. Writing of the auto-

biography, he says 'the genius of the Renaissance incarnate in a single personality leans forth and speaks to us.' We feel the frenzy of the time, the passion for work, the lust of life naked and unashamed, we realise, however faintly, what life must have meant in the sixteenth century to the men and women who 'without wealth or gifts' were forced to serve the powers that ruled without conscience and without remorse. Cellini gives the outrages with which he was concerned a measure of high colouring, and regards it as sufficient excuse. There are moments when the palpitating brutality of his narrative becomes disgusting. The story of his brother who served Duke Allesandro of Penna is a case in point. One of his brother's friends having been wounded in a brawl he had provoked, Cecchino Cellini stabs the soldier who had wounded him, and is shot for his pains by an arquebusier. Cecchino dies, fully satisfied with himself, is buried with due ceremony, and Benvenuto, when he has carved a Latin epigram to his brother's memory, lies in wait for the arquebusier and murders him, recording with complacence the fact that the dagger entered so deeply into his victim's neck that it could not be drawn out. When the Farnese Pope, Paul III., came to hear of the murder, he merely remarked, 'Give heed to your way of life, Benvenuto!'

The ease with which Cellini lied is revealed by his story of adventures in the Coliseum, which a magician fills on two occasions with 'legions of spirits.' A little later he commits another murder, but many men of standing, he tells us, called down blessings on his head because he had borne with his enemy so long, and Pope Paul observes that 'men like Cellini, who stand alone in their profession, are above the laws!' Finally, in order that the murderer may be appointed stamper to the mint, the Pope declares he must receive pardon at the time of the Holy Mary, when it was the custom to free a dozen outlaws. A little later at Chioggia he quarrels with an innkeeper, and cuts four beds to pieces, reflecting with satisfaction that he has done full fifty crowns' worth of damage. The story of his imprisonment, escape and recapture in Rome has been mentioned briefly. He tells how he kept the festival of the 1st of August with God in his heart, 'rejoicing all the time in faith and hope!' And later he says, 'I talked with God for a space!' At his release the autobiography enters upon its second volume, which opens with

the remark that, after being through his unspeakable trial, he was 'a greater wonder than ever,' and goes on to tell how he murdered a postmaster who had taken his cushion and stirrups. His fame took him to Paris to work for Francis I., but he came near to leaving the service at once because he was not paid well enough, and wished to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre. Some revelation of his methods is provided by the account of what happened when Francis I. visited his workshop.

'There was a little French boy working near me, who had annoyed me in some trifling way. I gave him a kick, and as ill-luck would have it, my foot caught him in the fork of the legs, and sent him reeling more than four cubits away; so that just as the king came in, the child fell up against him. His Majesty laughed heartily. . . .'

His quarrel with Madame d'Étampes brought the French work to an end, not before he had been worsted in a lawsuit, and had avenged himself on the plaintiff by wounding him so seriously 'as to deprive him of the use of his legs as well as injuring his arms. But I took good care not to kill him. Then I found the other man who had brought the suit, and gave him what made him glad enough to stop his litigation. Thanking God for this, and all His other mercies, and hoping I might now be left unmolested for a time. . . .'

This was not to be. There was an unsavoury lawsuit in connection with a girl he had seduced, and after making a singularly despicable exhibition of himself in court, he again 'returns thanks to God.'

Later on he forces one of his workers at point of the sword to marry this girl, and then makes her at once his model and his mistress, and treats her abominably. 'Yielding to my wrath, I took her by the hair and dragged her about the room, kicking and mauling her till I was worn out.'

A little later he takes as his model 'a poor young girl of about fifteen. . . . She was a pure virgin, and I got her with child. . . . She bore me a daughter when I just 44 years old.'

On his return to Italy he occupied himself with one of the greatest of his achievements, and one that happily remains to us—the Perseus with the Head of Medusa, for the Loggia dei Lanzi. Cosimo de' Medici was now his patron. A 'devilish scandal' drove him for a while to Venice, where he visited Titian and Jacopo di Sansovino.

The story of the casting of the Perseus is an extraordinary one. Quite apart from obvious exaggeration it has an indescribable sense of realism—he ends with the assurance that the work 'had been brought to a happy end by Almighty God.'

But he was not above intriguing with his patron's wife to persuade her to buy certain pearls. 'I was to have had more than 200 crowns for doing the business—the duchess had said as much; but I was quite determined not to touch a penny of it. . . . There was trouble, and worst thing of all, one of Cellini's rivals persuaded the duke to buy the pearls, and got a still larger commission—it is passing strange that he did not pay the penalty with his life. The success of the Perseus and the discomfiture of his enemies came as a consolation, and he tells us how he left Florence for a holiday 'in God's name.' Unfortunately there was a long quarrel about the price of the Perseus, and then Cellini writes that he was nearly poisoned by a man from whom he bought a farm, and he suffered a 'gross injustice.' After a long recital of his wrongs, he concludes as usual: 'I give the matter into the hands of God!'

A little later he brings his fascinating memoir to a close—in 1562. Three years afterwards he married one of his mistresses, who had already borne him children. He adopted another lad who turned out badly, and seems to have given a great part of the latter years to writing begging letters, and complaining of a poverty that existed only in his imagination. He published his *Trattati* in 1568, and died three years later, being buried in the Church of the Annunziata, where a friar pronounced a eulogy at which the autobiography seems to laugh.

Hypocrisy, at any rate, was not among Cellini's vices.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE RENAISSANCE IN FRANCE

GERMANY, the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal had already felt and responded to the influence of the Renaissance before France was well aware that a new revelation was at hand. The history of her awakening is profoundly significant, and characteristic of the French national *ethos*; even the last manifestation of the new movement remains individually French, and the type of man and woman evolved, although it shows traces of Italian modification, is in no way a servile copy of the enlightened Italian. Coming late in the history of the movement, when its first fire was well-nigh burnt out, the French Renaissance was a far less exuberant expression than that of Italy. It is true we catch some indications of a return to paganism, such as the Floral Games, the festivals of the *Gaie Science*, as the poetical contests at Toulouse were named, but there is nothing to equal the fervent abandon of a Lorenzo de' Medici, or the popular ecstasies of the Florence that was as ready to take its cue from his Bacchic orgies as from his pious hymns.

France, even in the south, was distinctly self-contained in her reception of the new learning. She was handicapped, too, by the *odium theologicum*. By the time she had responded in an appreciable degree to the teachings of Italy, Germany had already turned Renaissance into Reformation, and the resultant controversy found its echoes west of the Rhine, and embroiled while it embittered the whole question for thinking France. Into a movement that was in Italy utterly divorced from conscience, and untrammelled by *arrière-pensée*, Germany had obtruded the corroding conscientious scruple. The temper of her people led to a solution that was comparatively easy. The Gallic temperament, however, had still in it sufficient of the Latin to accentuate the difficulties. There was an element in the genius of Frenchmen that made the ideas of the Renaissance very attractive, and had the Church of Rome still held the position

which she enjoyed in the easy-going days of the Renaissance popes, France might have come, without difficulty, to a general acceptance of the new departure in intellectual things. But Renaissance, turned to Reformation in Germany, had hurled defiance at Rome, and the Church was forced into a position of defence. Seeking to counteract the threatening influences by reforming her own manifest abuses from within, she devised the counter-Reformation, which produced the reorganised Inquisition. And against the Inquisition the cause of intellectual freedom in France maintained itself with the utmost difficulty. The heresy-hunters, who were ready to seize upon the lightest pretext of error, found in Humanism a most admirable lever. The issues became confused. The doctors of the Sorbonne blindly opposed all progress, and at length the university of Paris formally set her face against the teachings of the Renaissance. But the cause found its steadfast upholders, some of whom suffered martyrdom, and died for liberty of thought with a constancy like that of men who died for the reformed religion: others, who took a less exalted ground, and contrived by dexterous trimming to escape, if not censure, at least the executioner, rendered signal service to Humanism by their patient enthusiasm in the pursuit of learning. We see no corporate academical movement in France as in Italy, but we do see the more eminent of the French scholars banded together informally, for the promotion of the cause they had at heart. The movement developed quickly, and by a happy accident nearly all its leaders were thrown together within a period of about twenty years. The Estiennes, Gryphe, Etienne Dolet, Cardinal du Bellay, Marot, and Budaeus are all found in close association at Lyons or in Paris, and with them we find Rabelais, as one born out of due season, who had, at forty years of age, quitted the cloister, and had come to gaze upon the world with the frank unspoiled eyes of a child. He alone achieved something of the lost exuberance of the Italian spirit, and this possibly because he came with such freshness to a world of which he had known nothing. To a child's inexperience he added the learning of a profound scholar, and the result of these two elements, fused in the crucible of genius, was that strange medley of humour, satire, philosophy, and unspeakable licence, wherein is contained the history of Gargantua and Pantagruel.

For the first beginnings of the Renaissance in France we must, however, go back to the days of Louis XI., when Gregory of Tifernum, a pupil of Chrysoloras, came to Paris as the first teacher of Greek. These were the days before the conflict of the counter-Reformation was dreamed of, and the rector of the university of Paris—that stronghold of scholasticism—was sufficiently liberal-minded to entertain Gregory with honour and to appoint him to a professorship. He was followed at a little interval by Jerome of Sparta, who was the master of Reuchlin and of Budaeus. Jerome's work was carried on by Tranquillus of Andronica. To these early teachers of Greek, there succeeded in the reigns of Charles VIII. and Louis XII. a man of greater name and position, John Lascaris, under whom Budaeus also studied. Lascaris had come from Florence after the death of Lorenzo, and his presence in France was the means of arousing a wide interest in Humanism. The relations between France and Italy, the wars resulting from the claims of the House of Valois to certain Italian Principates, notably the dukedom of Milan, caused a great increase of intercourse between the two countries. In the time of Francis I. the court was influenced by Italian culture, and Francis's famous sister, Marguerite of Angoulême, afterwards Queen of Navarre, realised to the fullest extent possible to a Frenchwoman the temper and spirit that animated Boccaccio's heroines.

But the first great manifestation of Humanism in France is to be found not so much in the halls of her universities as in the offices of her printers. During the opening years of the sixteenth century, there grew up in France a body of artists who rivalled the achievements of Aldus not only in typography but in scholarly accomplishment. Of these the chief were the Estiennes of Paris, Gryphe of Lyons, and later, Etienne Dolet, who has been styled the martyr of the Renaissance. Not only were these men fired with an enthusiasm to produce beautiful books, but they were themselves concerned as much with the subject-matter of the volumes sent to them as with the mechanical execution of the work. They had eagerly absorbed the new learning, they were accomplished Latinists, and Grecians of almost equal attainment, their houses became the counterpart of those learned academies which, in Renaissance Italy, had revived the tradition of Athens of the days of Pericles. They

gathered round them a body of students, who acted as correctors of the press, and who undertook independent duties as editors of the classics and as writers of original works and poems in Latin and Greek. At this period there were in Lyons two hundred presses in active operation. They were situated in the Rue La Mercière, which was the Lyonnais Paternoster Row. There were the offices of Gryphe, Jean de Latourne, Juste, Nourry, and Dolet. Their houses were marked by large gilt signs, each of which, in the quaint fashion of the day, symbolised sometimes in a slightly far-fetched manner the name of the printer. Gryphe was adequately enough represented by a gold griffin, but Dolet's axe was rather more recondite. It was founded on the word 'doloire,' which was a peculiar form of axe then in use, and its appearance, alike on the printing house and on the title-page of Dolet's books, is grimly ominous of the fate that was afterwards to overtake the master. The device on the title-page shows the axe held by a hand issuing from a cloud. Below is a fallen tree-trunk, already half split. The works that issued from the press of Gryphe were for the most part scholarly, and the house had the supreme distinction of numbering among its 'correctors' not only Dolet but Rabelais.

The press of Lyons at this time rivalled in importance those of Basle and Geneva, and all the leading men of letters in Europe, including Erasmus and Budaeus, employed one or other of the great Lyonnais printers. It was in the printing offices that enthusiasm for the new learning found its greatest encouragement, and the close association of literary accomplishment and typographical skill entitles us to regard the work of bookmaking at that time not merely as a mechanical trade but as a fine art and a learned profession. The printers were eminently clubbable men, despite incidental jars and rivalries, and those among them who are worthy to be considered intellectual leaders formed as it were a sort of informal academy. From this association there grew up the pleasing myth of the Société Angélique, of which Gryphe was said to have been the head and Rabelais one of the leading spirits. Florence Wilson, better known as Volusenus, the wandering scholar from Aberdeen, is said to have been a member of the society, and this much is true, that he enjoyed the friendship both of Gryphe and of Rabelais. There was no Société Angélique, so called, but there was

an informal association of men who combined the work of writer, scholar, printer and corrector of the press, who were held together not by any act of incorporation or special designation but by a common devotion to the new learning. It is a characteristic of the Humanistic movement in France that nearly every one of its most eminent professors became a storm-centre. The court of Francis I., it is true, affected an intellectual pose, and the king himself received the title of 'Father of Letters,' but he and his entourage were mere dilettanti. They professed a devotion to the Platonic philosophy, but their appreciation of it did not go deeper than a misinterpretation of Platonic love, which they used to add a new piquancy to gallant adventures. It is not there that the real work of the French Humanists found encouragement. Encouragement in the Medicean sense was, on the whole, lacking. It was only the individual effort and the sincere passion for learning of a few pioneers that gave France an opportunity of coming into the inheritance of Italy, and of producing for herself a new literature. There are names better known than that of Etienne Dolet, who, considering what he suffered simply for the cause of learning and liberty of thought (for he is in no way to be regarded as a martyr of the reformed religion), has fallen into a strange neglect, but there is no figure among Frenchmen of letters at that period more perfectly typical of his class. His life, too, is so closely bound up with the cause and progress of Humanism, and touched at so many points the intellectual processes of his time, that to consider him in detail is to find ourselves in contact with practically all the burning questions and all the leading men of the French Renaissance.

The court, as we have said, only played with learning. The constituted authority in intellectual things, the doctors of the Sorbonne, were deeply suspicious of innovation, which they, no less than the Inquisition, regarded as own brother to heresy. As a result of the opposition of these two bodies, we have the curious paradox of men who stood apart, alike from the old and from the reformed religion, persecuted, as though they had been fervent adherents of the latter. Their religion was the ancient classics, and the independent thought which the ancient authors had taught. For that Dolet went to the stake, and later the bold speculative philosopher, Peter Ramus, fell before the assassins of St. Bartholomew. The

great Budaeus contrived by an outward conformity to save himself from a like fate, which would certainly have overtaken him had he cared to show an independence even half as great as that of Dolet or Ramus.

According to his own account, Dolet was a native of Orleans. There is a legend that he was actually the son of Francis I., but of this there is no satisfactory proof, nor is it indeed probable. He claims, however, that his family was one of standing, and it is quite possible that, if not noble, the Dolet were at least in good circumstances. At twelve years of age he went to Paris, one of that band of students, often little more than children, who tramp, such pathetic figures, along the highways of Europe in those days. To us it seems almost incredible that infants of eight years old—for some of them were no older—should have been so possessed by the divine hunger for learning as to trudge patiently for weary leagues, begging their bread by the way as best they could, in order that they might at length reach the fountains of knowledge in some famous university. Such a boy was Dolet, such was Erasmus, such was Peter Ramus. The last made his journey to Paris when he was barely ten. Whether it was that the strenuous upbringing of the young in those days killed all too soon the spirit of youth, and made boys serious little men of the world before their time, or whether it is something bound up with the temper of the period, and with the glamour that surrounded the scholar's fame, the fact remains that the cause of the new learning found a strong auxiliary in the crowd of precocious children who thought hardship and suffering a light thing in comparison with the gifts of the Muses. At Paris our twelve-year-old Dolet threw in his lot with the Ciceronians. Cicero became his gospel. 'Christ and Tully for me,' he said, 'Christ and Tully alone are sufficient.' His Christianity remains nebulous, but his devotion to Cicero never wavered, and afterwards brought him into conflict on a side issue with the great Julius Cæsar Scaliger. After five years spent in Paris, during which he became an accomplished Ciceronian, and made some progress in rhetoric with Beroaldus, Dolet removed to Padua, where he came under the influence of Cardinal Bembo, one of those later Humanists who carried on the traditions of the palmy days of the revival. Dolet also formed a close friendship with Simon Villanovanus. The life of the group at Padua

resembled in many particulars that of the Florentine Academy, and from a fragment which Dolet has left, we catch a glimpse of what may very well have been typical of a student's day at the most renowned of the Italian universities. It is in the form of a dialogue between Villanovanus and Sir Thomas More. Such a visit of More's to Italy is, of course, a pure fiction, but it proves how high was the reputation of this English scholar when an obscure young student in Padua could choose More as a foil in a learned discourse on his own favourite master. At Padua good fortune came to Dolet in the person of Jean Langeac, Bishop of Limoges, who was on his way to Venice as French ambassador. He came in contact with the young scholar, recognised his ability, and asked him to accompany him as secretary. The duties of the post do not seem to have been very arduous; the great advantage of the engagement to Dolet was that during the year he spent in Venice he was able to continue his studies, particularly under Giovanni Battista Egnazio, the pupil of Politian. With Egnazio he read further in Lucretius and in Cicero, and began to collect material for his most important work—the 'Commentaries on the Latin tongue.' It is rather curious that during all this period we hear nothing of any progress in Greek. Dolet was pre-eminently a Latinist, and although we infer from other sources that he had some knowledge of Greek, he was never a particularly devoted Hellenist. Some have doubted that he knew Greek at all, but this is scarcely probable. The cult of Cicero was fertile of bigots, and among these Ciceronian bigots Dolet comes perilously near meriting a foremost place. He is almost a forbidding figure, with little to commend him in the lighter graces of life, but he is redeemed by one or two human touches. At Venice he fell in love, but death robbed him of his lady. He celebrated her in a frigid epitaph, and the poem does small credit to his gifts as a poet. Later he married, and showed that he was capable of family affection, but for the most part he remains an austere man. He loved music, however, and delighted in swimming. For the rest, Etienne Dolet is a fierce controversialist, an ardent votary of learning and of free thought, but ready to quarrel with even his best friends. Although he had taken literature for his mistress, he shows hardly one gracious spark of imagination. He loved the light, but to sweetness he was a stranger.

On his return from Venice he entered himself as a student at Toulouse, which was then a byword for superstition and bigotry. The city was overburdened with pious observance, failure in which brought upon the transgressor the severest punishment. The Tolosans had even burned a boy of nine years old for heresy. About this time they burned also Jean de Caturce, a lecturer in law, for adherence to the reformed religion. Dolet, who had witnessed the execution, denounced it in a Ciceronian oration to the students, and incurred the deep displeasure of the municipal authorities. His censure arose from no sympathy with the Lutherans, whom he described as an 'impious and obstinate sect,' but merely from his hatred of bigotry and intolerance. Caturce was a man valuable to the cause which Dolet had at heart, and the latter was further moved because an even more influential scholar, de Boysonne, professor of law and an ardent Humanist, had been made to suffer public indignity for his adherence to the new doctrines. De Boysonne, a weaker man than Caturce, saved his life by a recantation, the circumstances of which were made most painfully humiliating. It was an insult heaped by bigotry and ignorance upon the whole corps of Humanists, and this, apart from any religious consideration, Dolet could not forgive. His virulent outburst made him a marked man. Toulouse never forgot his offence, and after many years took her revenge.

Dolet was imprisoned, but the good offices of a friend procured his release, and he was spared for thirteen years of signal service to the cause of letters in France. He enjoyed a great reputation as a poet, but his performances in verse are inconsiderable. It was as a Latinist and as a publisher that he did his best work. Threatened once more with arrest, he fled from Toulouse, and was formally banished from that city. He settled at Lyons, where he found congenial society and occupation. There he became reader to Gryphe, with whom he published his orations, epistles, and poems. About the issue of his works he was somewhat disingenuous, for he pretended that his friends had printed them without his knowledge. Further, he gave to the world compromising letters from de Boysonne which should not have seen the light, considering how recently the writer had escaped the stake. But Dolet's correspondence with the most distinguished men of the age had so flattered his

vanity as to make him reckless of consequences to them. It was a gross error of tact and of taste.

Dolet was, however, to improve his acquaintance with the choicest spirits of his time. Lyons brought him into touch with Hortensio Lando, the great Ciceronian, with Clement Marot, with the Scèves, and already he had come under the notice of Budaeus, the first Grecian of France. But at the press of Gryphe he had for colleague the man who gathered all the paradoxes of the moment into one immortal compendium, and who, deeply informed with the new culture, yet held pedantry at bay, and writing his native tongue in a manner hitherto undreamed of, presented to a delighted world a fantastic reflection of itself, odd, distorted, indecent, impossible, yet tender, sincere, faithful, profoundly human, grostesquely inhuman, and withal supported on a philosophy lofty and ideal. There is a romantic fiction, sufficiently disposed of by Mr. Christie, that Dolet suggested to Rabelais his immortal chronicle. That distinction is not his, but it is sufficiently remarkable that the martyr of the Renaissance should have been a friend of its greatest exponent. There was an inevitable quarrel for which neither perhaps was to blame.

More important is his brush with Erasmus, which brings Dolet into enmity with Julius Cæsar Scaliger. Erasmus, in his *Ciceronianus*, made cruel but not undeserved game of the Ciceronian fanatics. His attack on Longolius, the completest French Ciceronian, and on Budaeus, whom Dolet almost worshipped, roused him to an inexcusable outburst of scurrility in that dialogue which, nevertheless, contains the pleasing imaginary portrait of Sir Thomas More and the picture of learned society in Padua. This defence of the Ciceronians was, however, no gratification to Scaliger. Julius Cæsar thought he had already made sufficient reply to Erasmus, and he was annoyed that a young man to whom he had shown some consideration should think it necessary to put in his word. He revenged himself by a rather mean attack on Dolet's competence as a corrector of the press for Gryphe, alleging that he had passed blunders which even schoolboys could detect, and for which Dolet deserved a severe whipping. These may be trivial points, but they are worth noting as illustrations of how that peculiar touchiness of the Italian Humanists, which found its worst expression in the diatribes of

Poggio, Filelfo, and Valla, was shared by their French successors no less than by the German and the Dutch. It survives to the present day, though under a polite mask, in the envenomed sweetness of rival university dons, be they 'pure scholars' or men of science.

During his residence in Lyons, Dolet finished and produced his most important work, *The Commentaries on the Latin Language*, the result of twelve years' labour. At the present day it is of little account, but in its own time it did more to promote Latin scholarship than any other book except the *Thesaurus* of Robert Estienne. To Dolet is due the method of grouping together cognate words and examining them in their relation to each other, which Estienne did not attempt to do. Consequently he must be considered a pioneer in philology, of equal importance with Estienne. The interest of the book, however, for those curious specialists who care to examine it to-day, lies chiefly in its personal revelation. In his asides he praises his friends and attacks his enemies, he introduces scraps of autobiography, and once, at least, he appears in a generous and amiable light, when, on hearing of the death of Erasmus, he forgets all that he has said in his first volume against the departed, and pays a warm tribute to his genius. Other notable works of Dolet are his version of Cicero's *Familiar Epistles*, and his admirable essay on the art of translation. He had also the courage to print one of the earliest French translations of the Gospels. But his works, although valuable and formative to their own age, are now little more than literary curiosities. His poems have nothing of that warmth and felicity which still make it possible for us to read Politian, Pontanus, and Sannazzaro. The Latin Muse, transported to France, if we except Macrin, refused to sing. Hendecasyllabic verse, which was usually preferred to the other forms, is scarcely tolerable, and the poems of Dolet are not more and often less agreeable reading than the best of the pieces in the *Deliciae Poetarum Scotorum*, which are themselves the direct products of the French Renaissance.

Enough has been said to show Dolet's relation to the intellectual life of his times. He enjoyed a sufficient fame, and was not without court favour. Both Francis I. and Marguerite of Navarre noticed him, and to Francis, through the influence of literary friends, he owed his pardon for an inadvertent act of murder, committed in

self-defence. That pardon was celebrated by a memorable supper party in Paris. Among the guests assembled in Dolet's honour were Budaeus, Beroaldus, Danes, the man of general culture, Toussain, 'the speaking library,' Macrin, N. Bourbon, poets both, his friend Voulté, Marot, 'the Gallic Virgil,' and Francois Rabelais, 'that honour and glory of the healing art.' Their conversation was what might have been expected. 'We passed in review the learned writers of foreign countries: Erasmus, Melanchthon, Bembo, Sadolet, Vida, Sannazar, were all in turn discussed and praised.'

This happy interlude was but the beginning of further troubles. On his return to Lyons he was again imprisoned, but was provisionally set at liberty. He now obtained a licence to print, and set up his own press. His enemies were still active and on the watch. At length the publication of certain heretical books gave the authorities a pretext to arrest him once more. Sentenced to death, he appealed to the parliament of Paris, obtained a pardon, and resumed his work. But a treacherous plot, the importation into Paris of certain parcels of forbidden books, stamped with his name as consignee, brought Dolet again within the arm of the law. His translations of the pseudo-Platonic Axiochus and the Hipparchus were held to contain a denial of the immortality of the soul. An unfair trial, extending over two years, during which he defended himself with admirable fortitude and constancy to his ideals, not religious but intellectual, ended in his condemnation to the rack and the stake. He died, as he had lived, grimly faithful to the cause of free thought, undisturbed by questions of religious faith or principle. Possibly he was what we should call an agnostic. He seems, at the end, to have considered that nothing mattered very much, except to depart as speedily and painlessly as possible. If one story be true, he consented to mumble an invocation to the Virgin and St. Stephen, his patron, in order to avoid having his tongue cut out and being burnt alive, instead of being first strangled. Another story makes him compose with almost his last breath a Latin epigram, much in the manner of the young Milanese conspirator Olgiati. The line shows Dolet unconcerned in the face of death, and, as he may have supposed, oblivion. He puns on his own name :—

'Non dolet ipse Dolet, sed pia turba dolet.'

To which the lieutenant in charge of the execution rejoined—*Au contraire*—

'Non pia turba Dolet, sed Dolet ipse dolet.'

A strange time, assuredly, when victim and executioner could bandy Latin impromptus beneath the gallows. But the story, if authentic, is entirely in the spirit of those Italian pioneers who had made it possible for Dolet to be what he was.

This extended consideration of a character relatively so obscure as Etienne Dolet may seem disproportionate in an account that can at the utmost only graze the outside of the subject, but his intimate association with the leaders of the French Renaissance served as a convenient rallying point. For his own sake he deserves to be remembered, for he represents the graver side of the movement. Bigot he was, but no dilettante. His work was rooted in reality, and affords a sharp contrast to the elegant court triflers whose shallow affectation of Italian culture would never have produced the French literary revival. Dolet may not have been a leader, but he was a valued auxiliary, and the esteem in which he was held by his colleagues is sufficiently proved by the galaxy of talent that assembled to do him honour in Paris, after his pardon by the king. Round that supper-table were gathered for a few brief hours the men who held in their hands the intellectual destinies of France. At least three of them were marked for enduring fame. They are inseparable from the history of the new intellectual movement, while Dolet is known only to the student of the period, but it was regard for Dolet that brought them together. A man who could so focus the best minds of his period must have possessed, for all his acknowledged uncouthness, some magnetism of personality that the written records of his life have been unable to communicate to a later age.

Among that company of Humanists, the man of the widest accomplishment, although not of the most commanding genius, was Guillaume Budé, known as Budaeus, a Parisian of good family, whose independent enthusiasm had made him the foremost exponent of the new learning in France. He springs from no school, he is influenced by no coterie. With very little definite teaching, he made himself what he was. At the university of Orleans he studied,

or did not study, jurisprudence, and left it realising that he had learnt nothing. Natural inclination drove him to seek out for himself less arid pursuits, and he found all he desired in Humanism. He contrived to get some twenty lessons in Greek from John Lascaris, and he went also to Jerome of Sparta for instruction in Homer, but Jerome was a broken reed. Budaeus therefore went on alone, mastering not only the classical tongues but the sciences. Reputation came to him early, and he attracted the notice of the court. Louis XII. gave him the usual employment offered by princes to literary men at that time—a secretaryship and ambassadorial appointments to Rome. Francis I. sent for him to Guisnes, during his meeting with Henry VIII. at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Budaeus's fame tempted the Father of Letters to retain him as a court ornament, and he was made Master of the Requests, Royal Librarian, and Provost of the Merchants of Paris. In public affairs he showed ability, but although he consented to hold the offices conferred upon him, he was not enamoured of court favour. With Prospero he would have said, 'My library were dukedom large enough.' His heart was in his books, his mistress was philology. His correspondence was as voluminous as that of Erasmus. Young students wrote to solicit his interest. Dolet was one of them. His letter was forwarded by a friend who was also a friend of Budaeus, Jacques Bording. The older man, highly complimented by Dolet's tribute, expressed in elegant Latinity, replies with great kindness, although that distant reserve, which made Budaeus somewhat unpopular, is not absent from the letter. He is willing to be of service to Dolet, but guarded. 'From your letter I have been in some measure able to judge of your learning; of your mode of life and your position I really know nothing.' Dolet replied with a frank piece of autobiography. They never became intimate, but Budaeus remained an interested acquaintance, while Dolet held Budaeus in the highest reverence, calling him 'the light of his age' and 'the greatest in reputation for learning of every kind.' Budaeus was suspected of favouring the reformed religion, but he escaped persecution by dexterous adaptability. He continued to live, if not at peace with Church and Sorbonne, at least in neutrality. A little time-serving conformity kept him on the right side. He did not wish to be a fighter, he had no ambition to suffer martyrdom. Only

let him pursue his studies in quiet, and he was content. His conduct may not be altogether heroic, but his successful evasion of an untimely end was good for France. He gave her intellectual prestige throughout Europe. He gave her the Collége de France.

That foundation was the best result of Budaeus's favour with the king. Francis had conceived the idea. It was Budaeus who brought it to birth and gave it a special character. He determined to incorporate what would one day be a fully equipped university, that would stand for progress in contrast to the conservative dogmatism of the Sorbonne. It was to be a real centre of a living Humanism, no stronghold of a dead scholasticism. Helped by Cardinal Jean du Bellay and by Margaret of Angoulême, he carried his point. Erasmus lent his advice. The nucleus of the scheme was the opening in 1529 of a small institution of two chairs, one for Greek, one for Hebrew. Next year these were increased to five. Before fifteen years had passed the Faculties of Arts, Philosophy, Mathematics, and Medicine were properly constituted. Educationally, France had come by her legitimate share of the Renaissance, a share which the bigots of the Sorbonne had sought to deny her, but in vain. Wisdom is ever justified of her children. The Sorbonne, with Beda at its head, issued futile deliverances, condemning Greek and Hebrew studies as heretical. No one cared. Francis laughed in his sleeve. At the moment he did not love the Sorbonne. He liked to see the theologians in a quandary. So the King's College took root and prospered. It flourishes, nobly housed and magnificently equipped, to this day; but the university of Paris perished with other effeté formulæ at the Revolution, and has never been restored as a separate entity. The word university is now used in France to denote the federation of all her teaching foundations. Among these the college of Budaeus, Francis I., and his sister Margaret occupies an honoured place.

The court patronage of letters in France at this period was active and useful, but as far as the king was concerned, it did not stand for anything very deep. Francis would to-day be called a sciolist. He was pleased to know about things rather than to know them. The real force in the intellectual life of the court was Margaret, who ought to have been King of France. Francis at his best was a brilliant trifler, at his worst a weak-kneed ex-libertine, trembling

for his own salvation. Margaret had all his keenness of intellect and natural liberality of outlook, coupled with daring resource and perfect steadfastness. In her statesmanship she wins admiration for wisdom, subtlety, fearlessness, and a superb dash, but it is on her artistic and literary side that she has made her enduring appeal to the imagination of posterity.

Margaret of Angoulême, later Margaret of Navarre, is like some air of the Italian Renaissance re-harmonised in the French mode. She reflects the extravagances, the pedantries, and at the same time the very real enthusiasms of the best days of the movement in Italy. She understood that life might be made a fine art; she caught the spirit of pageantry and of the literary coterie. Although she was never very wealthy, she contrived to surround herself with beauty; her two pleasure-houses, at Pau and Nerac, decorated by Italian workmen, were conceived in the most fastidious taste. The joy of a fair house and a fair garden was understood by Margaret as intensely as by the ladies of Boccaccio's story, which she imitated in her Heptameron. She loved plays, and devised curious interludes, she was more than a trifle bizarre; although devout, she could touch sacred things with that daring irreverence in which the period saw nothing incongruous. And withal, she preserved in spite of her madcap moods a strong common sense. She stood behind her unstable brother, and guided to success schemes he would have left to their fate after the first novelty had ceased to charm him. The organisation of the Collége de France was carried through only by her determination. Her house was a refuge for Humanists and Reformers. She entertained Calvin, Dolet, Marot, Bonaventure des Periers, and handled her ill-assorted guests with consummate skill. With equal address she continued to be at heart a reformer, and yet to escape peril if not censure. She wrote, she sang, she delighted in serious conversation. Every moment of her life she lived to the full. Trouble was never very far away, but she faced it with indomitable cheerfulness, greeting and charming the world with her incomparable smile. Margaret, though not conventionally beautiful, was fascinating. In that aquiline Valois face —a better copy of Francis's—intellect, shrewd wit, intelligence, a winning humanity, and a piquant mystery are synthetised. Her eyes are worldly-wise, but never weary. It is a face as baffling as

Monna Lisa's, but it lacks all suggestion of cruelty and strange sin. For Margaret, though unconventional and free of tongue, even to coarseness on occasion, lived pure from scandal, adored by the people she bewildered. In her was expressed the quintessential lady of the Renaissance, in her tastes Italian, in disposition unconquerably French.

The men of talent she encouraged were as diverse as her own character. Calvin, who must have abhorred her wild gaieties, could penetrate to the real worth of the woman. He signed himself, even at a moment of discord, 'her most devoted, her ready servant, even to obsequiousness.' She proved a loyal friend to the hare-brained poet des Periers, deeply as his impious 'Cymbalum Mundi' offended her. His suicide gave her unutterable pain. Clement Marot, whose erratic genius is another paradox of the times, was her valet-de-chambre. From a wild law-student, he developed into a wilder poet and courtier. His songs in praise of Margaret were too frank, but she understood. It was a mere convention of the period. The scandalmongers coupled their names, without reason. Their friendship was without blame. She helped him invariably in all his troubles, and without her he would assuredly have come to grief, for he was by way of being a reformer, though, truth to tell, he never took the new doctrines very seriously. The most curious circumstance in the meteoric Marot's career is the work that has secured his fame—his translation of the psalms of David into French verse. Both sides welcomed the production. Calvin had them set to music; the court was so captivated that psalm-singing, according to Marot, became the fashion. It is quaintly incongruous to picture the light ladies and gallants of Francis's circle obsessed by psalmody. The lilting measures, lending themselves easily to dance-tunes, had a great deal to do with this popularity, which was not confined to the court, and proved a powerful factor in the Reformation. It was part of that irreverence in handling sacred things which the age could tolerate without the least misgiving. What to the court was but a pleasing vogue, became for the devout a pious exercise. And so by a touch of worldly charm, the madcap Marot, who suffered from no overwhelming convictions, did his part in furthering the new ideas about the Kingdom of Heaven. At the same time he advanced the cause of French literature.

Other protégés of Margaret's were—Charles de Sainte-Marthe, who afterwards wrote her life; Roussel, her chaplain, whom she encouraged to write rather ungodly plays; Paul Paradis, who had been one of the earliest French students of Hebrew, and an accomplished Latinist and Grecian, and one of the original professors at the Collége de France. His colleague, Postel, the Orientalist, also adorned the 'Parnassus of Bearn,' as the court was nicknamed. Budaeus, though hardly of the domestic circle, was, as we have seen, closely associated with the Queen of Navarre in the active promotion of liberal studies. Among the artists were the Clouets, Adam Martel the illuminator, Leonard of Limoges the enameller. Benvenuto Cellini, though not a guest at Pau or Nerac, was then at the court of Francis, and received commissions from the king's sister. Margaret always knew what she was about. Benvenuto the artist was all very well; Benvenuto the man was not a person to invite. The queen did not demand respectability, but between the careless Bohemianism of Psalmody-Marot, always in some sort of foolish pickle, and the dirty blackguardism of Cellini, there was a distinction and a difference. Nobility of mind, however vagrant or mistaken, was the only passport to that thrice enviable coterie.

Here we may anticipate a little, to glance at a man who came to eminence somewhat later, and who did not touch the court circle of Navarre, but cannot be left out of account. The boldest speculative mind among the thinkers of the French Renaissance was found in Peter Ramus, who introduced the Socratic philosophy. He was a Picard, the son of a labourer, but of noble descent. After a determined struggle he made his way barefoot to Paris, and entered at the college of Navarre. For his graduation thesis, sustained when he was only twenty-one, he chose the astounding proposition: 'All Aristotle's writings are false.' The university was shaken to its foundations by such impertinence, but Ramus held his ground successfully. It was a case of enthusiastic Humanism against the old enemy Scholasticism. An ancient controversy had now come to a head. The attack had never before been developed with such point or brilliancy. Here in Paris the blighting influence of Mediævalism was assailed in form by a young champion of Modernity, inspired by the spirit of the ancients. Ramus, be it said, founded his thesis on a half-truth. What he attacked was not the real Aristotle, but

an Aristotle falsely interpreted by the Middle Ages. He won his case, against tremendous odds, and made an epoch in philosophy. It was a blow no less heavy to the Church than to the philosophers, for ecclesiastical dogma and the pseudo-Aristotle were one. He received his degree, and appeared as a public lecturer, first at the college of Mars and then at Ave Maria, where he drew crowds to hear him. Apart from philosophy, he promoted general culture, and was the first Parisian teacher to make his men read Greek and Latin in the same class. The publication of his *Divisions of Logic* and his *Animadversions on Aristotle* brought their writer under suspicion of being an enemy of religion and a corrupter of youth.

A Royal Commission suppressed his books. He removed to the college of Presles as principal, and carried on his work. The death of Francis I. and the accession of Henry II. proved fortunate for the innovator. Diane de Poitiers, Henry's mistress, was his friend, so was the cardinal of Lorraine. In 1551 a new chair was created for Ramus in the College de France. Three years later he issued his *Treatise on Logic*, written in French, which gives him his place as the first noteworthy precursor of Descartes. During the reign of Henry II. Ramus enjoyed liberty of expression, and did yeoman service not only to philosophy but to the cause of education generally. He was the first to make mathematical teaching valuable and important in the university of Paris. Considering the pre-eminence of Frenchmen in modern mathematical science, it is probable that France owes a deeper debt to Ramus's initiative in this than in any other department of knowledge. He laboured, too, in the cause of university reform, his views on which were modified by his leanings towards the reformed doctrine. To that he came in his usual spirit of scholarly inquiry, examining the origins of Christianity, testing before he accepted, but gradually finding himself more and more persuaded. After the death of Henry II. misfortune overtook him. Certain purely academic disturbances placed Ramus in a difficult position. A scandalous university 'job,' which he opposed, drew on him the implacable hatred of Carpentarius, a tool of the Guises. The cardinal of Lorraine abandoned him, he had to resign his chair, he went in danger of his life.

Ramus left Paris, and travelled in Europe, welcomed everywhere by the intellectual world. Many tempting offers came his

way. He declined them all, and returned to Paris, where he spent two more years in constant literary work. He was now an avowed Protestant, out of sympathy with the political Huguenots, but warmly desirous to see the Church return to its primitive simplicity. He was not allowed to teach, although he still held the title of president of the college of Presles, and enjoyed as such a double emolument. But he was a marked man. The day of St. Bartholomew was at hand, Ramus's enemy Carpentarius saw his chance. When the tocsin sounded from the tower of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, it rang the knell of the French Plato. Two days later Ramus was shot in his little fifth floor study in the college of Presles. He fell a victim, however, rather to the private enmity of Carpentarius than to his reforming principles. It is possible that the Catholic party, as such, would have let him alone.

So perished miserably one of the most gracious figures of the French Renaissance, a man far in advance of his age, of fine presence, courageous, simple to asceticism in his habits, the man who, in scholarly reputation and attainments, was the successor of Erasmus. He had all intellectual Europe at his feet, in general accomplishment he was the superior of the great Dutchman, who remained an incomparable classic, but lacked an equal enthusiasm for science and philosophy. It was Ramus's dream to see the university of Paris fully equipped for the teaching not only of pure but of mixed mathematics. To the chair of logic he wished to add others of ethics and political philosophy. In his scheme the 'idea of a university' was first completely conceived. Nor was his work confined to France alone. His followers, the 'Ramists,' exercised a powerful influence on thought and on education in England, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, and even in Spain. For many years after his death Ramus remained a European force.

There is, however, one greater figure, which if taken in strict chronological order, should have been considered earlier. But his scope is so comprehensive, his expression of his age so complete, his commentary so profound, that he is better understood after a general survey of the main tendencies that went to the making of the new intellectual France. We have already caught a glimpse of him in the learned society of Lyons and of Paris. Of the Lyons coterie,

he is the greatest figure, but he belongs properly to no place. He touched the life of the Lyonnais group at nearly every point, he shared the labour of the specialist in every department, he was a corrector of the press, which meant, as we have seen, that he had to undertake editorial as well as mechanical duties. He was *ci-devant* classic, man of letters, verse-maker, scholar, accomplished in all humane learning, and the maker of French prose. He had, further, his own particular walk in life apart from literature, and besides his engagements on the press of Gryphe, practised his profession of physician, and had charge of the Great Hospital of the city. But it is impossible to define Rabelais by these particulars. He belongs to the genius of France and of the world. Universal in his accomplishment and his insight, he observed his age as no man had observed it hitherto. He appreciated, with incomparable skill, its qualities and its defects. His brain was at once a microscope and a magic lantern, for it not only searched out detail, but it flung upon the screen of his written page an image, magnified many thousand diameters, of humanity as he found it. In order to describe the wonderful phantasmagory of his book we are forced to borrow from its author, and coin from his giant's name the adjective 'Gargantuan.'

Rabelais 'saw' his own times; he also saw through them, and he wrought his observations into the most astounding texture of humour, satire, entertainment, and impropriety the world has ever known. But amid all the licence, often shameless, there is an undercurrent of deep wisdom, sound sense, and wholesome humanity that has given the work an abiding claim on the esteem of mankind. It is as bewildering, as turgid, as full of contradictions as the life of the seething period it reflects; it is formless and inconsequent, universally learned and nonsensically coarse by turns, but its fantastic allegory, viewed as a whole, is always to the purpose, and that purpose we may gather from the dedication of the fourth book, which, if spurious and the work of enemies, is at any rate a curious betrayal of the way in which many regarded his work. He has been pressed to continue his fables, he says, because 'many languishing sick and disconsolate persons, perusing them, have deceived their grief, passed their time merrily and been inspired with new joy and comfort.' He desires to give by his pen the same consolation

he is always ready to give by his art and service. He is in fact anxious to be in a double sense the physician of his age. It cannot be denied that he knew how to gild the pill.

Francis Rabelais, the son of an apothecary, was born at Chinon, in or about the year 1483. He would thus be a boy just entering his teens when the revival of learning had reached its highest tide in Italy. It was the age of Lorenzo de' Medici, of Alexander VI., of the palmiest days of the Florentine Academy, of Savonarola. The expedition of Charles VIII. to Italy had opened up that intercourse between Italy and France which was to transplant the new ideas to French soil, as Rabelais himself in his later years transplanted certain Italian fruits and flowers to his native land. He grew up alert and curious, a precocious boy, who doubtless listened with wonder to such flying and vague rumour of events beyond the Alps as came to Chinon. But he was more concerned with the affairs of his own town and of the people among whom for a brief nine years he lived and moved. From these he was early withdrawn, for at nine years of age he was sent into the convent of Seuilly, and for nearly thirty years he lived out of the world. Later he was removed to the convent of La Baumette, near Angers, where there was a school that had passed, in its methods, somewhat beyond the old narrow scholastic ideas. Among his schoolfellows were the three Du Bellay brothers, great names in the affairs of France, with whom he formed a life-long friendship. His intimacy with Cardinal Jean du Bellay became of the utmost importance to his future career. A further step sealed him to the cloister. He entered the Franciscan monastery of Fontenay-le-Comte, where he devoted himself ardently to study and was fortunate in having access to a good library. His ideal was the prevailing ideal of the day, that of the universal scholar. He devoured all the books that he could lay hands upon, and mastered Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic, French works of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and such science as the period afforded—botany, astronomy, medicine, and mathematics. He worked alone. The brothers gave him scant encouragement, and he in turn was deeply disgusted with their ignorance, coarseness, and dissolute living. In those days he became profoundly disillusioned, and was supported only by the sympathy of one friend within the convent, Pierre Amy, and two outside, the

scholarly lawyer Jean Tiraqueau, and Geoffroy d'Estissac, Bishop of Maillezais. As a Franciscan he could occasionally get leave to go beyond the convent walls, and these opportunities of intercourse with the world must have kept him in some slight degree in touch with contemporary events. But his life was one of seclusion. In his most formative years he lacked the experience men gain by daily contact with their fellows—he was absorbed in study and in the duties of his Order. The consequence was that to the end of his life his most vivid impressions of the world were those he had received in childhood. When he returned to society, keenly as he observed the human comedy about him, he drew his local colour from his native Touraine. His colossal myths reflect the everyday life of Chinon and the valley of the Vienne; the myths themselves are not his invention, but glorified folk-legends of his own countryside.

Through all the years of his monastic seclusion, Rabelais had been consumed by the *wanderleben*. The convent was a prison, and delightful as his studies were, they only deepened his distaste for the cloister, and, as they widened his horizon, made him long for escape. The world was very wide and full of interest, the cloister grew more irksomely narrow and repellent every day. At last he could endure no longer. By letter he was already in touch with Budaeus; even in obscurity Rabelais was making a reputation. The brothers became jealous, they confiscated his books; there is a story that Rabelais and Pierre Amy saw the inside of the convent prison in a literal sense. However that might be, they had had enough of the rule of St. Francis. To this had the followers of the gentle saint of Assisi come! Rabelais and Amy, though good Humanists both, sought a mediæval oracle. They consulted Virgil by way of a lot. The book opened at the very line which had decided Savonarola to flee from the court of Ferrara:

'Heu, fuge crudeles terras, fuge littus avarum.'

It was sufficient. They fled from Fontenay-le-Comte. Then began for Rabelais that life of studious vagabondage, which, reacting upon the training he had given himself during his monastic years, perfected his mind, and brought to fruition that curious temperament of his which shines through every page of his incomparable

allegory. He went first to d'Estissac, with whom he stayed six years at Ligugé. Then he took the road and went where he listed. Poictiers knew him, La Rochelle, Normandy; he stayed sometimes with Guillaume and Jean du Bellay at Langeais. Then he bethought himself of the universities. He tried Bordeaux, but, like Budaeus at Orleans, all he learned there was that he had learned nothing. At Toulouse, if we are to take Pantagruel's experience as that of his author, he learned dancing, and sword play with both hands, 'as the fashion among the students of that university is to bestir themselves in games.' But at Toulouse he stayed not long when he saw that 'they did burn their regents (professors) alive, like red herrings. Now God forbid that I should die this death, for I am by nature sufficiently dry without heating myself any further.' So this wandering scholar *in excelsis* passed on. He tried Bourges, Nîmes, Angers, Orleans, Paris, and then in 1530 he arrived at Montpellier.

At Bourges he had flirted with the law, and profited somewhat. But withal he saw the canker of jurisprudence. Into Pantagruel's mouth he puts his word of censure on that gentle recreation of the learned. 'The books of the civil law were like unto a wonderfully precious, royal, and triumphant robe of gold edged with dirt.' *Vanitas vanitatum!* Yet all is not vanity. The humanity of Rabelais finds a congenial refuge in the healing art. At Montpellier, therefore, he enters himself as a student of medicine. Here a signal triumph awaits him. The student already knows as much as his masters. At the end of two months he is excused all further formal study and examination, and is admitted forthwith to the bachelor's degree, with leave to lecture on Hippocrates and Galen. He spends two profitable years at Montpellier. In 1532 he removes to Lyons.

What that city was at this epoch we have already seen. Besant has aptly compared it to Edinburgh at the opening of the nineteenth century. It was the Athens of early sixteenth-century France. In the capital, intellectual life, although it had its enthusiastic representatives, was less centralised. At Lyons it burned with fervent heat. The many-sided Rabelais found himself in a congenial atmosphere. He touched the life of the city at many points. His influence extended far beyond the circle of printers, scholars, poets, commentators, and men of science who were disseminating the new

ideas throughout France. As doctor to the Great Hospital he encountered civic life as an official; in the wards of the hospital, he came in contact with the most wretched of humanity. That he went among them as a friend may be inferred from his ideal of a physician, in which he would reinforce medicine by the cheerful manner, the careful dress and the pleasant word of the physician. Profound scholar as he was, doing the minute work of a corrector of the press for Gryphe, he never degenerated into a mere pedant. For him the world held something of deeper meaning than that Ciceronianism which was the only Gospel of Dolet and his colleagues. No man ever drew the line more adroitly between 'good learning' and pedantic affectation than Rabelais. We may take two contrasted passages by way of illustration. One is his inimitable off-take of the young man of Limoges, a Parisian student, whom Pantagruel meets outside Orleans. The other comes from Gargantua's advice to his son, one of the wisest and sanest epistles in the whole history of educational literature. The Limousin, an admirable dandy, is the progenitor of Molière's *precieuses ridicules*, but in him their dainty extravagances of speech are raised to a Gargantuan power. Old Sir Thomas Urquhart, Rabelais's translator, has contrived very ingeniously to give the gorgeous French balderdash an 'English' equivalent. At Paris Latinised French ran riot among the cognoscenti, who in their classical enthusiasm had made their native language perfectly unrecognisable. Pantagruel asks whence the exquisite comes, and is answered:

> 'From that alme, inclyte and celebrated academy, which is vocitated Lutetia.'

Pantagruel, though an accomplished person himself, can make nothing of this. He asks one of his friends for an explanation. Receiving it, he continues:

> 'Thou comes from Paris, then? And how do you spend your time there, you, my masters the students of Paris?'

The scholar replies:

> 'We transfretate the Sequane at the dilucul and crepuscul; we deambulate by the compites and quadrives of the urb; we despumate the Latial verbocination, and, like verisimilary

amorabons, we captat the benevolence of the omnijugal, omniform and omnigenal foeminine sex. . . . Then do we cauponisate in the meritory taberns of the Pineapple, the Castle, the Magdalene and the Mule, goodly vervecine spatules perforaminated with petrocile. And if by fortune there be rarity, or penury of pecune in our marsupies, and that they be exhausted of ferruginean metal, for the shot we demit our codices, and oppignorat our vestiments, whilst we prestolate the coming of the Tabellaries from the penates and patriotic lares.'

Which rigmarole Pantagruel interrupts with the only possible question: 'What devilish language is this? By the Lord, I think you are some kind of heretic.'

The last gibe is perfect Rabelais; his thrust at the age of which the watchword had become *Omne ignotum pro haeretico*. Readers whose Latin has not entirely deserted them will have little difficulty in fathoming our egregious Limousin's harangue. Briefly put, it means that the students of Paris are like all their kind—town-rovers, early and late, mouthers of Latin, gallant lovers, tavern haunters, and consequently hard up at times. When the purse is empty they sell their books and pawn their clothes, while they await the longed-for remittance from home. The opening of the harangue recalls that mediæval students' song introduced into Berlioz's Faust (but not in Goethe):

'Jam nox stellata velamina pandit
Nosque per urbem puellas quaeremus.'

This, however by the way.

The man from Limoges makes haste to vindicate his Catholicity in a further torrent of nonsense which we spare the reader. 'Prut, tut,' said Pantagruel, 'what doth this fool mean to say?' His henchman again obliges with an explanation, saying that the stranger would counterfeit the language of the Parisians, but he doth only flay the Latin, imagining that by so doing he doth highly Pindarize it in the most eloquent terms.

The unutterable one returns to the attack. The phrase 'flay the Latin' evidently appeals to him. He goes one better, refining it in his defence to 'excoriate the cuticle of our vernacular Gallic.'

It is delightfully amusing, and the more carefully one studies the jargon the funnier it becomes; but there we must leave it to the reader's independent examination, remarking only that at length Pantagruel's patience wore out, and he all but strangled the poor orator, who never quite recovered from the shock of that encounter.

That is Rabelais on the extravagant side of Humanism. Hear him now on its better aspect. The giant Gargantua, writing to his son regarding his way of life in Paris, recommends him to use his opportunities with all diligence. The letter, being from the pen of Rabelais, is not without its occasional side-strokes of satire, but its general tenor is serious, and it reflects the author's own feelings towards the studies that propped his mind. It is also the abstract and brief chronicle of the time, as far as the things of the intellect are concerned:

'Now it is that the learned languages are to their pristine purity restored, viz. Greek, without which no man may be esteemed to count himself a scholar, Hebrew, Arabic, Chaldean, and Latin. Printing likewise is now in use, so elegant and so correct that better cannot be imagined, although it was found out but in my time, by divine inspiration, as, by a diabolical suggestion on the other side, it was held to be the invention of the devil. . . . What shall I say? The very women and children have aspired to this praise and celestial manna of good learning. Yet so it is, that at the age I am now of I have been constrained to learn the Greek tongue—which I contemned not like Cato, but had not the leisure in my younger years to attend to the study of it—and I take much delight in the reading of Plutarch's Morals, the pleasant dialogues of Plato, the monuments of Pausanias and the antiquities of Athenaeus, in waiting on the hour when God my Creator shall call me, and command me to depart from this earth and transitory pilgrimage. Wherefore, my son, I admonish thee to employ thy youth to profit as well as thou canst, both in thy studies and in virtue. Thou art at Paris, where the laudable examples of many brave men may stir up thy mind to gallant actions, and hast likewise for thy tutor the learned Epistemon, who by his lively and vocal documents may instruct thee in the arts and sciences.'

Gargantua then proceeds to indicate a curriculum.

'I intend, and will have it so, that thou learn the languages

perfectly, first of all Greek, as Quintilian will have it; secondly the Latin; and then the Hebrew, for the Holy Scriptures' sake; and then the Chaldee and Arabic likewise; and that thou frame thy style in Greek in imitation of Plato; and for the Latin, after Cicero. Let there be no history which thou shalt not have ready in thy memory:—Unto the prosecuting of which design, books of cosmography will be very conducible and will help thee much. Of the liberal arts of geometry, arithmetic, and music, I gave thee some taste while thou wert yet little, and not above five or six years old. Proceed further in them, and learn the remainder if thou canst. As for astronomy, study all the rules thereof. Let pass nevertheless the divining and judicial astrology,[1] and the art of Lullius, as being nothing else but plain abuses and vanities. As for the civil law, I would have thee know the texts by heart, and then to confer them with philosophy.'

Much more follows. Pantagruel is not to despise the Talmudists and Cabbalists, and by frequent anatomies he is to get a 'perfect knowledge of that other world, called the microcosm, which is man.' That last precept is entirely characteristic of the Renaissance, which Michelet in his well-worn definition has called 'the discovery of the world and of man.' The present age will exclaim at this formidable array of tasks: 'Poor Pantagruel! What a father!' But the ideal of the *Doctor Universalis* was a mere commonplace of that strenuous time, and not a few, Rabelais included, attained to it. The endeavour must not be judged in the light of an age of specialism, but all the same the age of specialism would never have come round without the work of those forerunners. They were giants, moved by the first enthusiasm of a new cause. Nor was their wide knowledge so impossible as it may seem at the first glance. Those books which they mastered comprehended all the literature at their disposal. What to us is a task was their recreation. We have the vast treasure-house of modern writing to explore, and life at the best is brief. We must select; they could take all knowledge to be their province. In the sciences especially there was less for men to know. To compass all was within human power. To-day one can barely master fully even the smallest department. The two outlooks are

[1] Here Rabelais is at least a century in advance of his age; or, if we consider Bond Street of the present year of grace, nearly four centuries.

not to be compared, and if there is a touch of the impossible in Dr. Rabelais's Gargantuan prescription, we must bear in mind that he was writing a counsel of perfection, dated 'From Utopia.'

It is 'justifiable hyberbole'; the case is overstated a little, in order to make its proper impression. For some over-emphasis is necessary to every *doctrinaire*. We never apprehend the written or the spoken word with quite the same force as the writer or the speaker apprehends his initial idea. Rabelais is here stating, in a parable, his educational ideal. It is a giant who speaks, his scheme is necessarily gigantic. All cannot receive this saying, to every vessel its capacity. But a nature like Rabelais did not stint the measure, he poured it out lavishly, for each to catch in his degree. Prodigality is the main characteristic of Rabelais's allegory. He knows nothing of artistic restraint or of construction. He lets his pen run at the dictate of a super-exuberant fancy, everything that occurred to him he thought worthy to be set down. And he was right. However unnecessary some details of the book may seem to us, there is no critic who could, by judicious elimination, show how it might be improved. The Chronicle of Gargantua and Pantagruel must be taken as Rabelais wrote it, if we are to understand what it means. But it must be read seriously. To him who takes it up for mere wantonness, it is a sealed book. Especially is it a student's book. Until something is known of the history of the period, Rabelais loses half his point. To come to him rightly prepared is to enter his own Lantern Land, his allegorical presentation of the kingdom of learning. He is himself the lantern for students of the Renaissance. It is a subtle piece of symbolism that the Lanterns-of-Honour who there conduct Pantagruel (and the reader as well) are those of Aristophanes and of Cleanthes, the wittiest *farceur* and the most devoted *savant* of the ancient world.

The book from which these allegories are taken began to appear at Lyons in 1532. The first part was entitled *The Great and Inestimable Chronicles of the Grand and Enormous Giant Gargantua.* Upon a familiar fable of Touraine, Rabelais founded a story of inimitable nonsense. In its earliest form nonsense predominated. Later, when he had added the adventures of Gargantua's son Pantagruel, into which he had woven a grave philosophy, he saw that he must bring the *Gargantua* into harmony with the sequel.

He therefore rewrote the first book entirely, still retaining abundance of balderdash, but making the whole work the most extraordinary medley of absurdity and wisdom in literature. Sometimes Gargantua and Pantagruel are giants, sometimes they are of human size; we take them as they come, with their happy-go-lucky companions—Panurge the prince of rascaldom, and Friar John the archetypal buffoon. All the world, with its institutions, its virtues and abuses, is reviewed in that whirling phantasmagory of humour, satire, licence, promiscuous assault and battery, criticism, adventure, erudition, and when Rabelais pleases, lofty idealism disguised behind fantastic allegory. The education of the young, idealised society, the degradation of the priesthood, the corruptions of the law, the problem of marriage, the quest of the highest good:

> 'Quicquid agunt homines, votum, timor, ira, voluptas,
> Gaudia, discursus, nostra est farrago libelli.'

There is little of real beauty in the book, except the description of the Abbaye de Thélème, an ideal association of young people, gathered to enjoy life and make it noble under a travesty of monastic rule. The arch-satirist leaves the description of the Abbey to his egregious Friar John, but no matter, the narrator adds only a spice of piquant incongruity to a scheme that is itself not intended by its author as mockery. The idea could only have arisen in an age that had inherited the fantasy of the Troubadours, that had produced Boccaccio, that had seen the revival of the Academy, in its Florentine sense, and the very carelessness of the project only makes it the more amiable. 'Do what you will' is the motto written over the doorway, but this liberty is never suffered to become licence. All is arranged in accordance with the most perfect virtue. Thélème is Rabelais's vindication of his faith in human nature. Not all his extravagances are wholesome, but this is without taint. The members of the society practise what would to-day be called 'self-development,' they lead an idyllic life, men and women associate together on equal terms *sans peur et sans reproche*, and when at length the time comes for them to go out into the world, each man chooses the lady he loves best, they marry, and live happily ever afterwards.

The marriage question is debated by Pantagruel and Panurge, who fain would wed, but is blown about hopelessly by every wind

or argument, *pro* and *con*. At length they resolve to seek the oracle of the Divine Bottle, and set out on a voyage of marvellous adventures, a very Odyssey of absurdities, yet absurdity with a purpose. This part of the story is a travesty of that age of exploration and discovery. The embarkation preserves just such a scene as must have been witnessed at the departure of any of the great navigators. It typifies the age in its mixture of pious observance and careless jollity.

Gargantua, good old gentleman, after the laudable custom of the primitive Christians, devoutly prayed for the happy voyage of his son and his whole company, and then they took shipping at the Port of Thalassa. Rabelais, always painfully minute, describes the fleet and the equipment. And so they go up on board the *Thalamege*, Pantagruel's principal flagship, where was the general meeting. There Pantagruel made 'a short but sweet exhortation, wholly backed with authorities from scripture upon navigation,[1] which being ended, with an audible voice prayers were said in the presence and hearing of all the burghers of Thalassa, who had flocked to the mole to see them take shipping. After the prayers was melodiously sung a psalm of the holy King David, which begins, "When Israel went up out of Egypt," and that being ended, tables were placed upon deck and a feast speedily served up.'

Without eating and drinking on the most lavish scale, the narrative of Rabelais cannot proceed. At length, however, there is an end of festivity, and the fleet weighs anchor for the oracle of the Holy Bottle, 'which lay near Cathay in the Upper India.' The course laid down by the Portuguese is, needless to say, not good enough for our Pantagruelists. They go several points better, steering 'to the westward of the northern pole,' and so make a short cut, accomplishing without mishap, in four months, a 'voyage which the Portuguese with a thousand inconveniences and innumerable dangers can hardly complete in three years.' On that remarkable voyage, before they come to their desire, they visit many extraordinary kingdoms—the island of Medamothy, or Nowhere, the land of Ostentation; Ennasin, the isle of affectation; Lips, the land of ceremonies; Procuration, the land of lawyers and catchpoles; Tohu and Bohu, Ruin and Desolation; the Macreons or

[1] Note the thrust at pedantic methods of discourse and exposition.

long-lived people; Pope-fig-land and Pope-mad-land, and many others. Most pleasing is the approach to the famous Ile Sonnante, the Ringing Island. Here Rabelais is an artist; *malgre lui*. The air is full of a melodious jangle of bells, which is charmingly suggested by the phrasing. The clangour grows ever louder as the travellers draw near. We are reminded of Oxford when all the bells are going for chapel or for hall. It hardly needs the description of the inhabitants for us to guess that here we have arrived at the church. The dwellers in the Ringing Isle are of Aristophanes' own brood; they are birds, and very rare birds indeed, 'some as white as swans, others as black as crows, many as grey as owls, others black and white like magpies, some all red like red-birds, and others purple and white like pigeons.' They are clerg-hawks, monk-hawks, priest-hawks, abbot-hawks, bis-hawks, cardinal-hawks, and so forth for the males. The females are of the same name with the substitution of 'kite' for 'hawk.'[1] They live in gorgeous cages, and continually, at the ringing of the bells, flock together to sing and pretend to conjure. The whole ecclesiastical system is held up to ridicule in this allegory. Nowhere has the disillusioned ex-brother of Fontenay-le-Comte a good word for the priesthood, but here he dips his pen in double gall. When all has been surveyed, the word is with Friar John. He has his antidote. 'While we are looking at these devils of birds, we do nothing but blaspheme, but while we are emptying the bottle and the flagons we do nothing but praise the Lord. Let us then go drink.'

So they drink and depart. The adventures of several chapters immediately following may be passed over. It is certain that they are spurious and were interpolated by Rabelais's enemies in an unauthorised edition. At length the voyagers come—by way of the pleasant Isle of Satin, peopled by all the fantastic creatures of fable, unicorns, centaurs, and the like—to Lantern Land, to which Rabelais was inspired by Lucian. It is the country of light, learning, and truth. There, after mysterious initiatory rites, the Priestess Babuc leads them to the Divine Bottle. Panurge receives his Oracle. It is one word uttered in a thin tinkling voice like the cracking of a jar—TRINC.

Has the enormous fantasy, then, led only to this? For Panurge,

[1] So, at least, Urquhart renders *monageaux* and *moangesses* and the rest.

possibly yes. He has received the only oracle that he could understand. And Babuc interprets the dark saying with a gloss entirely to his satisfaction. She gives him a swig from a flask shaped like a holy book. But she enlarges on her burlesque interpretation in a way that the excellent Pantagruel, who had made the wisdom of the ancients his own, must have found as comforting to the spirit as that given to Panurge was to the arch-rascal's body. We are not told how Babuc's closing words affected Pantagruel. We cannot be quite sure that we have rightly apprehended them ourselves, but we do know that, in his epilogue, Rabelais has laid aside buffoonery and is setting before us, reverently and earnestly, his final reflections upon the insoluble riddle of the universe. He had pondered it long, he was marvellously equipped for the task, he had tried every spirit, and now the time was come to announce the conclusions drawn from a lifetime of observation and thought. Babuc says :

'Now, my friends, you may depart, and may that intellectual sphere, whose centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere, whom we call *GOD*, keep you in His Almighty protection. When you come into your world, do not fail to affirm and witness that the greatest treasure, and most admirable things, are hidden underground, and not without reason.'

Babuc, after allegorising on the realm of Dis, the underworld, as a symbol of the unsearchable riches of the Hidden Wisdom, solemnly affirms that to those who diligently seek after truth, the Almighty will, out of His infinite goodness, reveal even Himself.

'Thus will they be guided by good lanterns. For all ancient philosophers and sages have held two things necessary in order safely and pleasantly to arrive at the knowledge of God, and of true wisdom, first God's gracious guidance, then man's assistance.'

The ever copious and universally learned Author then bodies forth his last paragraph with a succession of sonorous examples, drawn from the ancient classics. He has that power of the ready instance, that mastery in euphonic use of the proper name which constitute one of the tokens of genius. Having cited many other couples of guided and guide, he concludes :

'Hercules, in his most difficult achievements, had his singular friend, Theseus ; Ulysses, Diomedes ; Aeneas, Achates ; *you* followed their examples, and came under the conduct of an illustrious

lantern; now in God's name depart, and may He go along with you.'

So ends the tremendous Book.

Briefly now we may return to the story of the author's life and the fortunes of his work. It was not possible that *Gargantua and Pantagruel* could escape censure. The story became immediately popular. The Sorbonne looked askance at it, and Rabelais was in danger. But he had the two earlier books read to Francis I., who was delighted, and licensed a new edition. In place of that, the author preferred to bring out his third book, in 1546. Next year Francis I. died, and the hands of the heresy-hunters were strengthened. Rabelais retired to Metz, whence his friend Cardinal du Bellay called him to Rome. With du Bellay he had been there twice already. In Rome Rabelais always enjoyed himself. He was bitten with all the amiable fads of the Humanists; he was by way of studying ancient topography, he dug for antique statues in a vineyard given to him for the purpose by the cardinal. We do not hear that he found any treasures. He peeped and botanised, and brought home the melon, the artichoke, and the carnation, which he acclimatised to France. Rabelais in Rome is an engaging figure. Pity that we know so few details of his sojourn. His return from his last visit he managed to effect rather neatly. He wrote a little book, describing the Roman festivities and the fireworks in honour of the birth of the Dauphin. This he sent to the king. The brochure pleased Henry. Rabelais came back, assured of safety, and accepted the curacy of Meudon.

His last years were undisturbed; he did the work of his charge, preaching, catechising, and, when necessary, chastising the children of the parish. *Gargantua and Pantagruel* was still exciting the angry passions of both religious parties, but no harm came to the author. In 1553 Parliament allowed the sale of his book. But a fortnight before the licence was granted, the author had resigned his living, rather finely; for things had so fallen out that, as an honest man, he must choose between his charge and his book. Had the permission not been delayed, he might have kept both with honour. As it is, the delay gave him a chance of vindicating his character before posterity. We like him the better for it. He went to Paris, where in a month or two he died. So great a hold

had he taken on the imagination of his contemporaries that they at once began to weave myths around his personality. There is no greater tribute to fame.

To moralise about the influence of Rabelais for good or evil is unnecessary and a little grotesque. He remains the man who apprehended and comprehended every phase of his extraordinary age, and with a shrewd insight and an unconquerable optimism, drew its portrait. His picture is extravagant in scale, but in proportion true. To make the grand tour of his inexhaustible book is to have seen and lived in France of the Renaissance.

Here this sketch might very well have ended, and it is something of an anticlimax to turn from the colossus to less robust figures. Enough has been said to typify the period, and it is here impossible to attempt completeness of detail. Yet we must remember that the notable sixteenth century had still a long way to go when Rabelais died. He had made French prose style, and in the last quarter of the century another monumental book, though of a different kind, was to be added to the literature of the world. Another shrewd intellect, less generous, but equally penetrating, was also observing the times in the light of its own vast erudition. But the genius of Montaigne left no gallery of humanly inhuman portraits set in a frame of quasi-romantic travesty. The first, and with the exception of Bacon, the greatest of essayists, is a person full of wise saws, of modern and ancient instances, who brought to any subject that took his erratic fancy an unrivalled store of learned comment and exemplification. His work is done at random; like the French falconers, he flies at anything he sees, but he always brings down his bird. That dry, unemotional personality has yet achieved an incommunicable charm in literature that has endeared it to the best minds of every succeeding generation. Montaigne's illustrations and oddly wise remark enriched Shakespeare, and became the favourite bed-book of Thackeray. But Montaigne falls almost outside our period. He, like some of the leading Spanish dramatists, authors, and artists, is a result of the Renaissance: he cannot be called a type.

It remains to glance at an important aspect of the development of French poetry in the work of a romantic coterie, the leaders of

which were Ronsard and Joachim du Bellay, the latter a kinsman of the three great brothers, the friends of Rabelais. Ronsard and du Bellay drew around them a band of enthusiastic young men, who had found a new religion in the poets of Greece and Rome, and in the teachings of Plato. They were touched by that pedantic spirit which led to the introduction of Latin forms into French. But what was caricatured as a vice in Rabelais's jargoning student from Limoges, became in the hands of the Pleiade, as Ronsard's associates called themselves, in revival of an Alexandrian tradition, a thing of supreme though artificial beauty. They studied form first of all, and it is form that has given the frail body of their poetic thought its strange and enduring loveliness. Their contemporaries were disposed to scoff at their Latinism, but it is, with all its limitations, a true contribution to poetry. No satirist dare call it mere 'despumation of the Latial verbocination.' It won its way to sure esteem, and now only the curious philologist can detect the barbarous innovations of the classicists. It is the foundation of the essentially classical poetry of France. It became the fashion among the cultivated of Europe. Queen Elizabeth, herself a distant kinswoman of Ronsard, sent him a token of her regard; Mary Stuart loved his verse, which must often have been accompanied for her pleasure by the lute of David Rizzio. In the market-place of St. Andrews, Chastelard died with Ronsard's 'Ode to Death' upon his lips.

The Pleiade—Ronsard, du Bellay, Baïf, Dorat (most elegant of Grecians), Jamin, Jodelle, and de Thiard—lived entirely for their art. The leader and Baïf studied Greek together, Baïf giving his senior lessons in exchange for instruction in the subtleties of metrical form, which Ronsard had explored with passionate ardour ever since he had been introduced to Virgil by a groom in the Duke of Orleans' household. They knew well and owed something to Marot, but they went beyond him in matters of mere technique. Five years before the death of Rabelais, Ronsard and du Bellay met casually at an inn, exchanged views and discovered that they were predestined companions on the intellectual highway. That chance encounter advanced the cause of French poetry another step. From the life-long association of those two poets sprang the frailest but the most exquisite flower of the Renaissance in France.

Of the purely scholarly impulse the later effects are to be traced in the work of the younger Scaliger, who performed prodigies of study, comparable to those of the earliest Italians, and in the critical labours of Casaubon, the speculations of Pascal and Descartes, but the last belong properly to the following century, and lie outside this inquiry. The subject can only be outlined in an essay such as this, and numberless details have perforce been omitted, but the attempt has been made by the selection of types to suggest at least the main tendencies of the new ideas in France and their effect on the Gallic genius. This effect was felt in work of the Encyclopædists and in the French Revolution; it is not exhausted to-day.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE RENAISSANCE IN ENGLAND

ALTHOUGH England became permeated with the spirit of Italian life and literature, the Renaissance took no very firm hold there, that is to say, the Renaissance as a mere efflorescence of classical scholarship. England knew no outburst like that of Italy, in which her cultivated classes revived a pagan enthusiasm, and tried to recreate once more the joyous and artistic life of ancient Greece and Rome. The Renaissance in England is to a very large extent the aftermath of an aftermath. This country had, it is true, her Humanistic period, but her great scholars and pioneers can be counted almost upon the fingers of one hand. Andrew Lang says, 'The spring came slowly up this way,' and after that quotation he adds, 'From the beginning the Renaissance at Oxford was rotten at the heart.' But something was achieved, and classical learning was certainly placed upon a new footing. The first impulse, too, came during the very best days of Italian scholarship, and came direct from Italy. We have already mentioned the influence of Boccaccio on Chaucer, and the scholarship of Wyclif. But the prime mover was Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, who, in 1425, sent to Italy in quest of treasures to enrich his new library. About the same time Poggio had come to England on a similar quest, but found it barren and unprofitable. Duke Humphrey, following the fashion of the cultivated Italian despot, made it a first care to surround himself with scholars. He favoured Pecock, Capgrave, and Lydgate, the translator of Boccaccio. He invited over from Italy young Humanists who could assist him in his studies, and he corresponded with those greater lights who could not be persuaded to cross the Alps. Some of these atoned for their absence by sending him translations of the classics. Among the young men whom he brought over were Lapo da Castiglionchio, an accomplished Grecian. From Verona came Antonio Beccaria, a pupil of Vittorino da Feltre, thus linking the English revival of learning directly to the

work of the greatest of the Renaissance schoolmasters, and Tito Livio of Forli was proud to be 'Poet and Orator of the Duke of Gloucester.' Every Humanist whom chance or business brought to England could be sure of a welcome from Duke Humphrey. When Piero del Monte came to collect papal revenues, the duke secured from him some philosophical dialogues.

Humphrey was, for a time, in close touch with the great Aretine himself, Leonardo Bruno. They had come into correspondence owing to Humphrey's interest in Bruno's translation of Aristotle's Ethics, and the duke urged him to set to work immediately upon the Politics. Humphrey lost the dedication of this notable version by delaying to acknowledge the copy of the first part, which had been sent to him in London by the translator. The Aretine, offended by Gloucester's silence, withdrew the dedication, and substituted the name of Pope Eugenius IV. It is only a sentimental consideration, but it is unfortunate that the revival of letters in England should have lost this interesting link between the prince, who did so much to bring the new learning to our shores, and one of the most distinguished of the Italian Humanists. But Humphrey has the credit of having encouraged Pier Candido Decembrio to finish his translation of Plato's *Republic*. From the letters which passed between the scholar and the prince, we know that Humphrey, for all his enthusiasm for humane learning, had no Greek, for in his letter of thanks to Decembrio, for the dedication of the *Republic*, he says, that through Candido he is at last able to admire Plato. From this correspondence we learn of some further interesting links between Humphrey and the more eminent Italian Humanists. Decembrio tells him of Manuel Chrysoloras, of Bruno, and of Guarino of Verona, and in one passage we have proof that the Humanistic movement, to which it is difficult to assign any precise time-limits, so gradual was its growth, had at last become definitely self-conscious. Decembrio, after mentioning the great teachers we have alluded to, speaks of many others who are now labouring at the classics, when but a short time before there had been none.

Humphrey, however, found a limited response from his country; the time was not quite ripe for England to receive the Humanistic movement. Yet scholasticism was falling into disrepute, and men were discovering that it had no true relation to life, for which

it formed no adequate preparation. Humphrey himself, an old Balliol man, had been trained in the narrow tenets of the schoolmen, but his natural liberality of mind had enabled him to escape the cramping influence of the system, and to see the true value of what Italy had to offer. Before the first half of the fifteenth century had closed, considerable progress had been made, so much so that that prince of Latinists, Pope Pius II., could write to the Bishop of Chichester a letter congratulating him on his Latinity. The Pope says, 'he marvels that Latin style had penetrated even into England.' The most noteworthy names among the men who went from England to Italy to bring back the new learning were Gray, Free, Flemming, Gunthorpe, and Tiptoft. They were all Oxford men, who were probably inspired by the work that Duke Humphrey had done. They may have received, too, a fresh impulse from the use of his library, and it is just possible, that as Humphrey was in constant communication with the university, some slight changes in the direction of Humanism had been made in the educational system.

However that may be, this Oxford group, all, except Flemming, Balliol men like Humphrey, found their way to Ferrara, where, under the protection of Ercole d'Este, Guarino of Verona had settled down to that teaching of Greek which did more, perhaps, than the work of any other Humanist to spread Hellenic studies throughout Europe. All the Oxford group studied under Guarino, or at least came in contact with him. The work of that brilliant little band was destined, however, to bear small fruit for England. John Free died abroad; Tiptoft, forsaking his scholarly pursuits for political intrigue, died on the scaffold; the others separated, and only the books that they brought back, or the translations that they had made, remained to lead other Englishmen in the paths of Humanism. They had shown, too, that Greek and natural science, philosophy and medicine, were all within the grasp of English students. Fortunately the pioneers were succeeded by three other adventurers into learning, whose work, faithfully persevered in, was the true beginning of English scholarship. These were Thomas Linacre, William Grocyn, and Thomas Latimer—all Oxford men once more. Linacre had already indirectly come in contact with Italian influence while he was at Christchurch School. There his master was William Selling of All Souls, who had

studied at Padua and Bologna, and had come into contact with Politian and Chalcondylas. Grocyn also, who held a prebendal stall in Lincoln Cathedral, must have been influenced by Robert Flemming, who was Dean. By the time these men were ready to visit Italy the first great race of Italian scholars had all but passed away. Guarino was dead, and Ferrara was no longer a point of attraction, but Florence had achieved a new glory in Politian, who was now drawing to that city the scholars of Europe.

Linacre made his first journey to Italy in 1498. He studied under Politian, from whom he caught the trick of style, as yet but little apprehended by the English scholar. He was specially favoured in Florence by Lorenzo de' Medici, who allowed him to attend Politian's private tuition, together with the young princes, Piero and Giovanni de' Medici. He spent a year in Florence, and then visited Rome, where he made the acquaintance of Aldus, and where he also studied Plato. In Rome he became acquainted with Hermolaus Barbarus, who urged Linacre, Grocyn, and Latimer to translate Aristotle. The work was undertaken, but none of the three except Linacre completed his part. His attention to Aristotle was not, however, without an important influence on his career, for it turned his attention to natural science. He went to Padua, and graduated in medicine, and further pursued his studies at Vicenza, under Leonicenus, who had restored the method of Hippocrates. Both Linacre and Grocyn returned to England about the same time, and they immediately began to spread the new learning, as they had acquired it, in their Alma Mater. The earlier generation of Englishmen who had made the journey into Italy had not succeeded in leaving any lasting monument of their studies, but they had laid the foundation for the work of others, by providing their university with books. This was peculiarly favourable to the work of Grocyn and Linacre. The former, although the founder of Greek learning in Oxford, extended his influence beyond the field of pure classical scholarship. He was mentally one of those paradoxes of which the period was so prolific. Although an enthusiastic Humanist, there still survived in him a large measure of the schoolman. So accomplished indeed was he in the scholastic doctrine as to win the admiration of Erasmus, not of course that Erasmus had any liking for Scholasticism, but because he admired accomplishment in a subject,

whatever that subject might be. So from the study of the ancient tongues, Grocyn passed to Biblical criticism, and it is to his piety that we can trace the foundation of the modern historical method.

This application of the new learning was quite characteristic of the English Renaissance, and was perhaps an outcome of the intensely practical genius of the English people, although Puritanism had something to do with it as well. The culture of Italy, both classical and native Italian, early became suspect in England, where the true spirit of the Renaissance never took root. It was never, as in Italy, a popular movement. It had great and beneficial effects in the advancement of learning, and consequently of the popular intellect, but the influence was radiated from a few centres, and the culture of Italy was applied rather than adopted. There was a great increase of intercourse between England and Italy, but the impression made by the Italian at home, as the travelling Englishman saw him, and by the Italian sojourner in England, as he was seen by the Englishman at home, was not favourable to him. Even Englishmen who cared deeply for the ancient learning began to fear for its influence upon the youth of their own country. The gay spirit of naturalism, in which Florence had sought to revive the most picturesque side of paganism, became anathema to the serious Englishman. Roger Ascham, while venerating the classics, must needs sound a note of warning against the craze which had arisen for sending young men abroad to make the grand tour. The decadence of Italy after the Sack of Rome had been very speedy, and the fairest country in Europe had become a byword for corruption. England saw her young men, who had been sent abroad to study and expand their minds, return home little better than affected fops—very often they had become utterly dissolute. Later, the phrase 'Italianate Englishmen' was almost the worst reproach that could be hurled at one of our countrymen.

The process of assimilating Italian culture seemed to produce a peculiarly sinister type when that culture was on English stock, nor did the Italians themselves respect it. 'An Italianate Englishman,' ran their proverb, 'is a devil incarnate.' So to Ascham and other grave men the grand tour seemed a thing inadvisable. What classics, what Italian had to be learned, had far better be learned at home, and even Latin and Greek began gradually

to lose credit. Ascham, as a matter of fact, recommended Hebrew instead. While Grocyn gave a classical direction to scholastic study by applying it to Biblical criticism, Linacre, whose chief interest was now centred in medicine, was also incidentally aiding the revival of learning in Oxford by his translation of Galen. And so Oxford gained at once the medical and Hellenic school, and was, for a generation at least, to be a vital exponent of the new Humanism. Before another generation the influence had almost entirely passed away, but the Oxford school had trained More and Colet, the former of whom is in many ways the typical Englishman of the Renaissance, while the latter by his services to education gave England the benefit in some sort of the work begun by Vittorino da Feltre.

There is some idea that during his residence in Italy John Colet had come in contact with Savonarola, for he speaks of certain monks of true wisdom and piety. He brought to greater perfection the historical study of the Holy Scriptures, which led him to reject to a great extent the doctrine of verbal inspiration. He was influenced in his later life by the Neoplatonism of the Italian scholars. He knew the mystic Platonic philosophy of Ficino, and he quotes from Pico della Mirandola, whose Hebrew mysticism would also appeal to him. But all that he accomplished in this respect is small compared with his work as a pioneer of English elementary education. By his foundation of St. Paul's School he brought the English youth under the influences of the Renaissance. His first headmaster, William Lilley, had been a pupil of Pomponius Laetus, and the method followed by Lilley and Colet was shortly afterwards further extended in England by the foundation of other schools on a similar model. In England the scholar was for the most part distinct from the Churchman, but the Church was not without its active patrons of the new learning. Waynflete and Courtney, Bishop of Exeter; Langton, Bishop of Winchester; and William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, were all men who had studied in Italy, and sought to further the cause of learning in their native country. Warham, in particular, played a part that was somewhat to seek in England—that of the Italian Prince who favoured letters. The first Englishman who approached at all to this ideal was, as we have seen, Humphrey of Gloucester. Warham was equally active in the patronage of scholars, and Erasmus, who made his acquaintance

during his residence in England, and who received from him the offer of a benefice, calls Warham 'his special Maecenas.' Nor must we forget Chicheley, another visitor to Italy, whose enthusiasm for good learning led him to found All Souls College.

Cambridge was longer in establishing Greek studies, but after she had felt the influence of the Renaissance, she went ahead with that liberal enthusiasm which has always characterised her. Her introduction to the new learning she owed to Bishop Fisher, who wished to set Cambridge on the same footing as Oxford. In 1511 he brought Erasmus to teach Greek informally at Cambridge, where there was some reaction in favour of scholastic dialectics—a thing of which Erasmus complained. He set himself, however, to turn the minds of the students towards more profitable subjects, and ten years later he was able to say that Cambridge could compete with the best universities of Europe. But it must be remembered that even down to the year 1516, Oxford, despite the teachings of Grocyn and Linacre, was without a regular chair of Greek. That was first provided for in the foundation of Corpus Christi by Richard Foxe, Bishop of Winchester. The aim of the founder was to suppress all barbarism, and to that end we have the first prescription of a truly Humanistic course of study in England—for the Greek chair both Greeks and Italians were eligible. The undergraduates were to go through a curriculum that was to embrace the representative classical authors, and for vacation studies they were recommended to take up the works of Lorenzo Valla and of Politian. England, however, was not ready for this return to antiquity. Such devotion to Greek aroused a fierce opposition, and it caught two parties hotly debating the claims of Grecians and anti-Grecians—the latter being styled Trojans. But the cause of humane learning was to triumph for the time at least, because, in the very earliest days of its taking root in England, it had produced a disciple who was to be its warmest advocate, Thomas More himself.

That gracious and gentle figure, the pattern of wisdom, piety, and wit, stands out pre-eminently in an England torn with religious and political strife—an England that was gradually being crushed between the palms of a selfish tyrant. More had been brought up in a hard school. Although he was well born, he had not been permitted by his father to know even the semblance of luxury, and his

great talents, although they were noted by his first patron, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who used to prophesy that this child now serving at table would be a remarkable man, had never been so flattered as to breed in him arrogance or extravagance. At Oxford he was permitted only the barest necessaries of life, and it was the same when he was afterwards entered at one of the Inns of Court. But close study and frugality, and even hardship, could not embitter the sweetness of that serene nature which became for England the fair expression of all that was greatest in her character and genius.

Deeply versed in the classics and in modern Italian thought, More never became even in the slightest degree an Italianate Englishman. In himself he expressed what the Renaissance might have meant for Englishmen generally, had they known, as he did, to eliminate from the new Italian influences all that was base and unworthy. No man ever realised more completely those qualities that were long afterwards to be described by Matthew Arnold as 'sweetness and light.' More, although he lived a strenuous, practical life—for he was the most successful practitioner of his day at the bar—was at heart an idealist, to whom the wrangling of the courts was a thing entirely distasteful. To him his study, and the companionship of his books, his dreams of the perfect country of Utopia, were the matters that lay nearest the heart. His home life is one of the loveliest things we can find in the rough England of that day. It went with the gracious courtesy of a Platonic dialogue, for More, who loved his Plato, seemed to enthuse into his intercourse with the cultivated friends he drew around him the spirit of the older academe. And in his zeal for education, too, he was the inheritor of the best Italian tradition. He denied his daughters no opportunity of intellectual advancement, and they, Margaret especially, responded to their father's enthusiasm. It was the age of learned women in England as well as in Italy. Ascham had trained Lady Jane Grey to be a marvel of accomplishment. Margaret More was no less learned. Queen Elizabeth was brought up in the same school, and Bacon's mother, Anne Cooke, is even more consciously proud of being able to show what a woman can do in the things of the intellect. Anne had been reproved by her mother for wasting her time over Italian, 'a godless study.' In revenge, she translated some of Occhino's sermons in order to vindicate the spiritual side

of the Italian nature. She apologises gently for meddling with the work of Doctors of Divinity, and she points out that now 'through the honest travail of a well-occupied gentlewoman and virtuous maiden, these Italian doctors speak in English.' The rest of her apology is very charming. If errors should be found in the translation, she pleads with her critic 'to remember 'tis a woman's —yea, a gentlewoman's, who commonly are wonted to live idly—a maiden that never gadded farther than her father's house to learn the language.' In the words lies a veiled defence against the rising objection not only to the study of Italian, but also of the going abroad to learn it. But to return to More. Such was the liberal temper towards the things of the mind that marked his intercourse with his companions, and his training of his daughters.

So busy a man was he that any time he found for his beloved studies he had to steal from sleep and from meals. His life was that of the public man, whose talents were not to be hid and were soon to draw him, sore against his will, into the more immediate service of the monarch who afterwards betrayed him with a kiss. 'To court' he had to come at length, and to the office of Lord Chancellor of England. Henry, who in his bluff way had a spark of the new culture in him, loved the society of the witty and the learned, could himself turn a neat rhyme, write a stave of music, appreciate a learned discussion, and enjoy a clever jest, made much of his chancellor. He employed him abroad, on embassies very distasteful to the student, but none the less faithfully performed. Unannounced, Henry would descend upon that quiet house at Chelsea, where he made himself very agreeable to the ladies, and would walk by the hour in the garden with his arm round his chancellor's neck. But for all this favour, More had no illusions. On one such occasion, when some one had remarked to him upon how high he stood in the royal favour, he replied, 'I tell you I have no cause to be proud thereof, for if my head would win him a castle in France, it would not fail to go.' More was often a guest at the royal table, where his discourse served to lighten for Henry the boredom of Catherine of Aragon's company. Of this the King now made no secret—he was weary of his wife—and he had fallen under the spell of Anne Boleyn. It was an evil day for More when Anne came into Henry's life. Thence the whole sorry business of the divorce, wherein More remained faithful to

the conscience of a good Catholic, for it is a curiously significant thing that the most enlightened man in England of his day was never touched by the reformed doctrine. This most pure and devout Christian found in the Church of Rome no flaw or contradiction. By her teaching he abode steadfastly, and no bribe or blandishment on the king's part could lead him to declare Henry in the right. The storm was long in breaking, but at length More had to resign the Great Seal. It was through the Act of Supremacy that Henry finally got rid of him. Nothing can be more pathetic than the picture of More before the Council. They were unwilling that he should sacrifice himself; when he declared that he could not subscribe to the test, they bade him take a turn in the garden to reconsider the matter, but he came back unshaken. For a year the ex-chancellor lay in the Tower—ill-lodged and ill-cared for. At last he was dragged to trial in Westminster Hall. The London citizens thronged the streets in their thousands to watch him pass to his assize. It was a prematurely aged and broken man that they saw, who supported his feeble steps with a staff, but who still kept that serene and pleasant wit—that fearlessness which had been the ornament of his best days. He was scarcely allowed a fair defence, yet his old readiness did not desert him, and he put down a bullying prosecutor with the most perfect address. But nothing could avert his doom, and a few days later the wisest head in England fell upon the scaffold on Tower Hill. It is said that when Henry heard the news of More's judicial murder, he turned angrily upon Anne Boleyn, and declared that this was her work. The taunt was mean enough, yet not without its essential truth, and Nemesis was not far away.

Oxford, as we have seen, had bred More to be the mainstay of Humanistic culture in England. Cambridge, with the aid of Bishop Fisher, greatly advanced the study of Greek and Hebrew, and it was by the bishop's munificence that Richard Croke was appointed the first professor of Greek at Cambridge, and also it was by Fisher's assistance that St. John's College was founded. In 1511 Fisher, who had been working together with Lady Margaret, summoned Erasmus to Cambridge, where, as we have seen, he worked and taught for several years.[1]

[1] See above, 'Erasmus,' chap. xxii.

Apart from the question of mere learning, the influence of the Renaissance had an important development in England in moulding the intellect and the career of her men of affairs. Hitherto, statecraft had been in the hands either of the nobly born or of the churchman. But the new spirit had produced a new idea, that has been called in our own day, 'the career open to all the talents.' As Gaisford said, in that memorable fatuity of his, contained in a Christmas sermon at Christ Church, 'And finally let me impress upon you the study of Greek literature, which not only expands the mind, but also leads not infrequently to positions of considerable emolument.' If we put the study of humane letters generally and of Italian culture and literature for the narrow term Greek, we may have, fairly enough, a recipe for the making of the successful English courtier of the period. For the first time, men of even humble extraction were able to hold their own in the councils of the State, simply because a more polished idea of life was coming into vogue, and men of position were concerned to inquire what were the arts that constituted a gentleman. One who had learning and manners was now admitted to the most exclusive circles, and the Humanities became, as they had never been before, a passport to power. More himself, as it happened, was a man of good birth, but Thomas Cromwell, Wolsey, and, later, Cecil were men either of little consideration or of entirely humble origin.

England took her lesson in the making of the perfect courtier from Italy. First and foremost, among the many manuals of gentlemanliness, stood the *Courtier* of Castiglione. It is the great classical example, but its application is somewhat restricted, and accordingly it was another work, the *Galateo* of Della Casa, that had the most formative effect on European manners. The *Galateo* was translated first into French and Spanish—it did not appear in England until 1596, although there can be no doubt that it was known before that time—because the French and Spanish languages were now in current use among all people of education. Another book of the same class was Romeai's *Courtier's Academy*. Cinthio's *Platonic Doctrines* were translated by Bryskett in his *Discourse of Civil Life*. The rules laid down for the improvement of manners give us, by implication, a key to the extraordinary uncouthness from which social life was just emerging. The 'Thou

shalt nots' are more illuminating than the actual precepts of gentlemanly bearing. Through the whole of this cult of fine manners, one sees an interesting departure from the work of the mere pedant. The minute and laborious scholar is no longer valued for his minutiæ and labour. All that makes for intellectual or social improvement is pressed into the service. A man is now to be learned and witty for a practical object, he is to know antiquity in order that he may be prudent at the council-board, and may have before him the example of the ancients. He is to practise poetry and music in order that he may be a pleasing companion. In Petrarch's time, the sonnet was taken very seriously; in the richest days of Tudor England, we have Shakespeare's authority that men practised poetry in the service of their mistress' eyebrow. The earlier scholars, profound as they were, must sometimes have been unutterable bores. It is characteristic of the England of the Renaissance that it aimed, with Italy's help, at achieving a lighter manner. This was the beginning of that temper which in our own day has been carried to excess, the temper of the men who despise even the thorough knowledge they possess, and, for fear of being thought pedants, affect the ignoramus.

Nor was the Englishman of the Renaissance content to occupy himself with intellectual exercises alone. He was concerned with the use of the sword, and London was full of fencing-schools, sometimes called colleges, at which the fees were often exorbitant. At Rocco's in Warwick Lane, the young gallants of England sometimes paid £100 for the course, and the establishment seems to have been elaborately equipped. The patrons' coats-of-arms hung on the wall, beneath them their rapiers, daggers, and gauntlets. For an extra fee there was extra private tuition, where Rocco put his young men up to all his secret arts of defence. But the place was more than this—it was a club. There were pens, ink, and abundance of gilt-edged paper for the young men to write their billets-doux.

The pen was asserting itself side by side with the sword. Only the hand that was expert with the rapier could have turned the love-lyric of the Elizabethan age. As a matter of course, all these fencing-masters were Italians. More famous than Rocco was Vincenzo Saviolo, whom John Florio, the chief Italian preceptor of his time in England, described as the most perfect fencer. The craze

for Italian schools of swordsmanship gave old-fashioned Englishmen grave offence, and the English fencing-master found the Italians dangerous and objectionable rivals. But they had grown indispensable. That most finished of English gentlemen, Robert, Earl of Essex, was the patron of Saviolo, who, in dedicating to him his *Manual of Practice*, styled him the 'English Achilles.' England looked also to Italy for instruction in horsemanship, and Edward VI. had an Italian riding-master. Horsemanship, as a subject for polite pens, continued to engage the attention of the English nobleman into the seventeenth century. Lord Herbert of Cherbury, who, though flourishing late as far as our present period is concerned, was nevertheless in mind and manners a most perfect product of the Renaissance, included the management of the steed among his many learned discussions. The age aimed at the perfect development of man, both mental and physical, and athletic exercises and field-sports were esteemed quite as much as book-learning in the education of a gentleman. It is in this strenuous quest for what we should now call the 'all-round man' that the English Renaissance finds its chief characteristic. As a movement of pure scholarship in the Petrarchan sense, the Renaissance in England withered early, but its influence, diffused, differentiated and applied to practical ends, was largely instrumental in building up that wonderful type of character, solid yet versatile, which marked the great Elizabethans.

We have the deep political sagacity of the Cecils; the enterprise and learning of Raleigh, at once an Empire-builder and a scholar; the serene genius of Spenser, who drew his inspiration to a large extent from the fantastic romance of Ariosto; the grace and courage of the ill-fated Essex, the subtle and somewhat sinister fascination of Leicester, the sturdy virtues of those mariners, Drake, Frobisher, and Hawkins, whose contribution to our knowledge of the world is reinforced by that hardy patriotism with which they beat back the Spaniard from our shores. They, it is true, had less of the courtier's and scholar's grace than of the mariner's downrightness and daring, but even on an English quarter-deck the more delicate spirit of the age declared itself in Sir Richard Grenville.

To the Italian influence also was owing the interest in music, which, from the time of Henry VIII., was largely extended among the English people. To sing at sight was a necessity for any young

man of condition, who might at the shortest notice be called upon to do his best in a four-part song. He had need to be very skilled in reading his notation, for the four parts were written in different books, without any parallel cue to the other harmonies. Nothing but the strictest knowledge of time could keep the singer right, and it was no doubt the remembrance of some blundering performance that led Shakespeare to write:

> 'How sour sweet music is
> When time is broke and no proportion kept.'

The vogue for instrumental music was equally common, and viols hung on the walls of every barber's shop, so that the waiting customers, who would nowadays glance over *Punch* or the illustrated papers, took down their fiddle, and began an impromptu concert. A favourite form of amusement was to play what was called a 'descant in the Italian manner.' The first violin would give out a theme, and the others, from their knowledge of counterpoint, had to improvise the complementary parts. This device called for a good deal of ingenuity, and for not a little forecasting of the harmonic changes which the leader would spring upon his colleagues. However abortive the Renaissance may have been in a certain sense, its quickening influence on the artistic sense of England is undeniable, and at no time has the English public been so sensitive to the best artistic productions. Even the common people were quick to apprehend the excellent in literature; the plays of Shakespeare enjoyed a popular success. To-day they are adventured only by the most daring managers, who contrive by the lavishness or the bizarrerie of their stage decorations to attract a debauched and blasé public. Only the most cultivated people nowadays are alive to the sheer magic of Shakespeare's lines. In the poet's own day a good piece of verse was valued and appreciated even for its technical excellence, what we might call the cant of criticism was then in the public mouth. It is true that the groundlings liked their ears tickled with a little rough buffoonery, but they could also hiss bad lines as readily as the ancient Athenians, and they hissed because they knew exactly how and why the lines were bad. England of those days had an ear for melody and a sense of style that is now lost, perhaps irretrievably. One has but to hear the songs that were the popular songs

of Renaissance England, and contrast them with the raucous and formless ditties of the present day, to realise how utterly the popular mind has lost touch with art, even in its simplest and therefore its best form. To compare, for instance, the exquisite cadences of 'How could you treat a poor maiden so' with the music-hall ditty of the present hour is to realise how utterly the ancient fire has gone. An England to which such song came as a natural expression was an England that stood not far from that spring-time impulse, of which the first stirrings had moved Francis of Assisi to ecstatic love for all created things.

It is possible, of course, to overrate Shakespeare's England, and to forget the relics of barbarity, uncouthness, and backwardness that still clung to society, but in spite of all this, there remains the central and essential fact that the age produced Shakespeare. In him, as in no other poet, are summed up and expressed all those influences that proclaim the English Renaissance. At bottom the plays are essentially English, but they are coloured to an exquisite richness and warmth by the glory of that Italian spring which 'came slowly up this way.' The inspiration, the scene, the very story, are again and again Italian, but it is Italy seen through English eyes. The courtiers who move across Shakespeare's stage are Englishmen who have learned the manners of Italy. To those who ask how the poor hanger-on of the theatre came by his knowledge, it may be suggested that every bookstall in London was crowded with translations from the Italian authors. For such a mind as Shakespeare's it was necessary only to have skimmed a book in a chance half-hour to comprehend the whole matter, and to be able to throw it into the form his genius prescribed. Too little attention, we think, has been paid to the possibility of this alertness of mind in Shakespeare. To us the whole temper of his works seems to suggest that such was exactly the sort of mind he possessed. This granted, it is unnecessary to postulate Francis Bacon.

That supreme genius, however, fills a great place in the history of the Renaissance in England. In him it took a new form, a new direction. Deeply learned alike in the wisdom of the ancients and in the native culture of the newer Italy, Francis Bacon made no conventional use of his knowledge. His intensely practical English mind held him apart from a creation merely artistic, but his over-

whelming originality would not be denied. He arose at what may be called, for want of a better term, the psychological moment. The merely scholarly movement had spent itself. England, it seemed, had no mission to emulate the studious work of a Petrarch, a Poggio, a Ficino, or a Politian. Italy had done great things for learning pure and simple, but in philosophy she had hardly advanced beyond a misty speculation, based for the most part upon misunderstanding of philosophic texts. It was given to Francis Bacon, profiting by the teaching that Italy had made it possible for him to receive, to examine the wisdom of the ancients, and to formulate a new philosophy, without which the world would not have seen that advancement of pure and applied science which marks the greatest intellectual achievement of the present day, and is, in effect, the real heritage of the Renaissance.

HENRY IV., BY RUBENS

(*In the Louvre*)

Henry IV., who is leaving for the war in Germany, is seen conferring upon his Queen the charge of the kingdom.

CHAPTER XXIX

GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the foregoing pages we have traced, in the merest outline it is true, but still with some consistency, the progress throughout Europe of that intellectual impulse which, for want of a better name, we have come to call the Renaissance. The movement was bound up inseparably with the Revival of Learning, but the mere return to the study of classical antiquity, with its accompanying intellectual stimulus, is not by any means all that is contained in the meaning of the word Renaissance. If it was a re-birth, it was also no less a new birth, for it has in it elements that are entirely original. In its earliest stirrings, this quickening of intellectual activity originated the modern world and modern ideas. Therein is no mere revival of something that had existed in an earlier state of the world's history, but an entirely new product of human thought and of human action. Viewed as a whole, the rise of the modern spirit presents an ordinary and consecutive progress. We have seen in its first beginnings, even before the so-called Dark Ages had come to an end, how the light of learning was never wholly quenched, even when the grasp of ecclesiastical authority was strongest, and when the numbing hand of the scholastic philosophy had checked all originality of thought. From such a state of things revolt was inevitable, and it was a revolt that coincided with a number of circumstances entirely favourable to its success. Restraint must always produce reaction. The natural curiosity of the human intellect had begun to chafe against the bonds of the Church, and the Church itself had been seen to be assailable. It was not for nothing, as we have pointed out, that Europe saw Frederick II. daring to defy the Holy See. It is impossible, of course, to adduce any satisfactory proof that Frederick's defiance of the papacy was a quickening force, for his work appeared to perish with him, but it is not unreasonable to conclude that the Emperor, who had drawn upon him the eyes of

Europe for nearly forty years, must have left an abiding influence on the men of his own generation, and this influence they must have communicated to their sons. We do know from the Chronicle of Salimbene, that most intimate personal revelation of the latest Middle Age, what a profound impression Frederick made upon his contemporaries, and not by his defiance of the papacy alone did he herald the new time. His patronage of poetry, his pagan delight in physical and intellectual luxury, his entire unscrupulousness, his unbelief that conformed to the popular faith, all make him the spiritual kinsman of the great despots of the Renaissance. The gentler expression of the time had, as we have seen, also its exponent and precursor in Francis of Assisi, who combined with a child-like faith a joy in mere created things, entirely foreign to the Church's contempt of the world, and amounting, it may be said, to a sanctified paganism. But as far as immediate results were concerned, both Frederick and Francis failed of any over-mastering influence on their times, and where the intellectual life of the Renaissance is concerned, the work of Francis remains vital only in so far as the legend that grew up around his name proved the inspiration of the early painters, Cimabue and Giotto.

Fifteen years after the death of Frederick was born Dante Alighieri, in whose life and work we can, for the first time, clearly see a master spirit, moulding the thoughts of his fellow-men towards a new conception. Dante was not conscious, to be sure, of any such effort, and to the end he remained faithful to the Middle Ages. But that springtime of life, which had showed itself blossoming so delicately in Francis, was equally alive in Dante. His genius moved, it is true, in the medium of an older time. He achieved no real emancipation of thought, so far as thought was concerned, but in his artistic expression his emancipation is complete. And it is, as Gebhart has pointed out, in his kinship with pictorial art that Dante vindicates his genius. The age to which he belonged had no conception of beautiful literary form. To the age that was about to dawn some glimmerings of that conception had already been vouchsafed, but in Dante it is perfectly realised. His material belongs to the old, his method is entirely of the new, and therein he achieved, even before the Renaissance had properly begun, more than any other Italian writer was destined to accomplish. In the seven hundred

years that have elapsed since his birth, Europe has seen but one other poet worthy to be named beside him.

The Revival of Learning owes nothing to Dante, except in so far as his works became a valuable literary exercise-ground for the men who were to advance the cause of scholarship. Petrarch is a notable exception. So much was the first modern man a modern, that Dante, the last mediæval man, made little or no appeal to him, but the diligent Boccaccio, who did very real service to the advancement of learning, was a professional commentator on the *Divinè Comedy*, and regarded Dante with a devotion that amounted to hero-worship. Already in Petrarch's and Boccaccio's time, the first half of the fourteenth century, the interest of the Italians was thoroughly alive to the value of classical antiquity. Ancient Rome was becoming a cult, men were eager to know more of her history and her institutions, to recover her buried riches, and likewise the literature of Rome's teacher, Greece. We have seen how the long line of scholars arose, and how these, fostered by Despots and Popes, awoke Italy to a new intelligence, and not only revived among the writers a sense and appreciation of style, but widened the whole horizon of human thought, and awakened that spirit of enthusiasm which, except in the region of the narrowest religious devotion, the Middle Ages had sternly repressed. Drunken with the new culture, the learned men of the Italian academies dreamed of bringing back the gods of Greece. Life became lyric once more, and the Florentines went singing to the pipes of Pan.

This picturesque awakening to the sense of beauty carried with it its own defects. Licence went side by side with liberty, and even outstripped it. Corruption lay at the root of even the fairest flowers of the Renaissance. The professional scholar was in too many instances assimilated to the type of Juvenal's esurient Greekling, supple, nimble-witted, exquisitely accomplished, but too often utterly worthless. As the age of scholarship approaches its zenith, we see a man of the highest accomplishments prostituting his talents to compositions of the loosest sort, which even the most scholarly of the Popes reads without a blush, and returns with a gift of six hundred crowns to the writer. But in spite of these drawbacks the professional scholars and their patrons, the Medici, the Sforza, the D'Este, the Gonzaga, who made literature renowned in Florence,

Milan, Ferrara, and Urbino, and the Popes from Nicholas v. to Leo x., who made the Vatican as vital a nursery of culture as the Florentine Academy, had laid the foundation of a work that was to revolutionise the thought of Europe. Italy's part was played in something under two centuries. When she came under the yoke of Spain, in 1527, the Italian Renaissance was almost immediately extinguished. Already its first fire had cooled, and what vitality was left was devoted to the culture of native Italian literature.

But the years that saw the extinction of the movement on its native soil, saw its extension throughout Germany, the Netherlands, France, and Spain, until at length it touched in a modified degree the shores of England, and Boccaccio's prophecy was fulfilled at least in spirit. Then the *Studiis tardus Britannus*—the Briton, who was like Snug, 'slow of study'—adapted in his own way, and to his own peculiar needs, the benefits of the new movement, not only in letters, but in the amenities of art and life. The fame of the new learning crossed the Alps in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, and attracted German students to Italy, but it was not only what these men learned and what they taught that brought about the momentous Teutonic development of the new spirit. When we say that a spirit of inquiry and of reaction was abroad, we state a fact, the causes of which it is impossible to trace with scientific accuracy. Even before her student-travellers had done much to awaken Germany, thoughtful Germans were moved by a new ideal of education, and were asking themselves seriously whether the monastic schools ought really to have the monopoly of instruction. The scholastic method had ceased to satisfy. Perhaps it is not very far wide of the mark to discover at least one cause of the Renaissance in the fact that the human intellect was starved, and this starvation was not confined to Italy alone, whence the universality of that desire for a fuller and richer intellectual life, which seemed to be permeating Europe.

But, with the quickening of intellectual effort and aspiration in Germany, there arose another consideration, in its tendency reactionary, and one that was to turn the new movement into an entirely new channel. In its full tide the Italian Renaissance had utterly separated itself from theology, except in so far as it strove to reconcile it with Platonism and the teaching of Oriental mystics. But it was in the nature of things that Germany could not escape

the theological bias. She produced, none the less, men like Melanchthon and Wimpheling, who would have been ornaments to scholarship in any age or country, but their work is overshadowed by the tremendous personality of a man to whom erudition was entirely secondary to faith. Without the Renaissance, Martin Luther would have been impossible, yet he took from the Renaissance merely what would serve his purpose, a wider intellectual horizon, a more reasonable view of Holy Scripture, that enabled him to pierce and expose the effete absurdity of the scholastic philosophy. But the trammels of theology so warped the Renaissance movement in Germany and wrested it to new ends that it ceased, even in name, to be Renaissance, and became Reformation. Therein, perhaps, it was the more profoundly original. As far as Italy was concerned, the matter amounted to a re-birth and an attempt to recreate the past, that incidentally threw off certain shoots which would ultimately bear new fruit for Europe; but the German genius, touched by the quickening of intellectual life, assumed a form at once constructive and destructive. It brought to Europe not peace but a sword, and yet, for all the turmoil it occasioned, made Europe more secure of her heritage of modernity than the gentler graces of the Italian Renaissance could ever have won for her. Corrupt at the root, though very fair in its flower, the Italian Renaissance withered, as it were, in a night. The Reformation, on the other hand, in its Teutonic thoroughness, assured for Europe the continued development of that intellectual impulse which Italy could no longer sustain. Hitherto there had been attempts at reformation of the Church from within, but no one of these efforts, admirable as they were, had any extended or abiding influence. They were for the most part purely local, and they ended with the lives of their projectors. There is no greater proof of the vitality of Luther's work than the fact that it produced what is known as the Counter-Reformation —that far-reaching movement which actually revolutionised the moribund Roman Church and secured her for some further centuries of life.

Throughout these pages we have seen how paradox is inseparable from the spirit and history of the Renaissance. The great Italians abound in fascinating contradiction, but the most fascinating of all belongs to the Teutonic Renaissance. Out of the recrudescence of

theological turmoil arose that Netherlander, who of all northern men approximates most nearly to the delicate intellectual vigour of the Italian scholar. Nurtured in religious polemic, pitifully entangled in his later days in acrimonious theological warfare, Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam is yet, of all men, the most perfect type of his period. He inherited the best tradition of German scholarship, and so developed it by his native genius and industry that it hardly seemed necessary for him to go to Italy. Yet to Italy he went at length, and put the crown to his life and to his learning, and through him, in great measure, England, whose scholars, returned from Italian travel, had done much for Erasmus, received from him much in return. The work of Erasmus, although of the first importance to Europe at large, was in great measure lost to the Netherlands, owing to the wars which tore the country after Erasmus's death. Happily the influence remained, and with the return of peace it bore great fruit in the work of Heinsius, Lipsius, and Grotius as scholars, and in that of Elzevir and Plantin as printers. It is traceable also in Spinoza, whose period places him outside the Renaissance as far as the scope of this inquiry is concerned.

France received the new influence last of all the Continental countries, but the French genius seized it, and moulded it to an entirely new manifestation. The first beginnings may be traced from the expedition of Charles VIII. into Italy, and the movement continues in full force till the reign of Louis XII. Intercourse between France and Italy became general—eminent Humanists crossed the Alps, bearing the new learning into southern France, and in due time its influence was felt in Paris itself, only to meet with the most strenuous opposition. The doctors of the Sorbonne were too much for the Humanists. France, the eldest daughter of the Church, would have nothing to say to the spirit of innovation, and in the end the university of Paris formally rejected the Renaissance. Meanwhile, in Toulouse, a similar battle had been fought, and Jean Caturce, an eminent jurist, and Etienne Dolet, the printer, had been put to death, not because they were in any way professors of the reformed religion, but simply because the temper of conservative France could discern no difference between disciples of the new learning and of the newer faith. It is to that grim martyrdom that Rabelais alludes with sly humour when Pantagruel says that

he would not stay in Toulouse because when he arrived there he found them burning professors, yet in spite of persecution and misunderstanding, Humanism triumphed in France. It produced those great printers, the Estiennes, whose work is hardly to be ranked second to that of Aldus ; and in pure scholarship we have Turnebus, the apostle of the movement, the two Scaligers, the martyr Etienne Dolet, Marot, Muret, Cujas, Ramus, De Thou, De Beze, and the great Calvin himself, who, although he burned Servetus, and allowed himself to be carried away by a mistaken zeal, made himself a place among theologians that all his errors cannot destroy.

The Renaissance was heavily handicapped in France as an instrument of pure culture, merely because its influence took hold there at a time when the question of the new doctrines from Germany had become acute. Already the antagonistic spirit of the Counter-Reformation was stirring Rome to activity, and the inability of such authorities as the doctors of the Sorbonne and the Capitouls of Toulouse to discriminate between pure scholarship and heresy, laid a severe handicap upon the cause of mere intellectual advancement. In Italy the great Humanists were allowed to be careless sceptics without incurring the hostility of the Church, if we except the onslaught which Paul II. made upon the Roman Academy —an inconsiderable incident when compared with the organised hostility of France. But the easy combination of unbelief, loose living, and fine classical accomplishment, that went unharmed in Italy, would have been impossible in France. The irony of it all was that the men whom the Inquisition persecuted on French soil were not scurril knaves like Poggio and Filelfo. They were for the most part grave and earnest thinkers, whose only crime was that they would range themselves neither with the party of the Church or with the party of Luther. Etienne Dolet, a man of orderly life, as times went, simply held aloof from all religious concern. We can hardly say what he thought of these matters. He was consumed with a fiery desire for learning and for intellectual liberty. In his early student days he committed the unpardonable sin, by launching his denunciation at Toulouse for the burning of Caturce. The Church could not have him then, but she watched and she never forgot, and at length, after he had done incomparable services to learning and to the press, he earned the title of ' Martyr

of the Renaissance.' In the society of Dolet and his companion, Gryphius, the famous printer, head of the fabled Société Angélique, that delightful myth of an academy at Lyons which one would fain believe, there was included another and a greater figure, who, in one immortal work, sums up all that is comprehended in the French Renaissance. There you have the genius of France, gay, witty, and buoyant, informed by the best and the worst that the Italian influence had to bestow. Amid inextinguishable laughter, with piercing satire of contemporary abuse, and yet with a wise, a calm, and a sane outlook upon the world as he found it, Dr. Francois Rabelais, in his tremendous fantasy of Gargantua, Pantagruel Panurge, and the Divine Bottle, crystallised for all time the impact of antiquity, transfused through an Italian medium, on the scintillating genius of Gaul. Incomparable in its ribaldry as in its wit, equally incomparable in its superb humanity, and its exposition of faith in the best possibilities of human nature, the gospel of Pantagruelism comes to us as the most complete expression of an age, fantastic, disturbed, and cruel, yet with leisure for the humanities, and for the contemplation of the things that transcend humanity.

The same age produced a genius of similar learning, but of a more exact habit of mind, who has left us a shrewd and witty book that passes current more freely, because it has few or none of the undeniable objections that must always preclude the general study of Rabelais. His is the book that should be approached only by the serious student who, discounting the sheer animalism that defaces so many pages, can pierce below and see the deep and true gravity of the author's intent. With the essays of Michel de Montaigne it is otherwise. With very few exceptions his essays are for general use. In them is crystallised a lifetime of profound study and shrewd observation. His examples are encyclopædic, his wit most delicate, his conclusions just. He it was who first taught Europe the delights of the Essay—that pleasantly discursive overflow of a wise man's thoughts. Without Montaigne we should not have had Bacon. Through John Florio's translation, Shakespeare came to know him well, and the dry, droll erudite Frenchman is the inspiration of countless pregnant passages in the greatest dramatic literature of the world. It is but one example of the countless streams of Continental influence that filtered through Italian, French, and

Spanish mediums to enrich Elizabethan and early Jacobean literature in England. It informs in an especial sense the work of Dr. John Donne, who is one of the most typical expressions of the last modification of the Renaissance spirit. Classical learning, the conceits of Italy, observation as shrewd as that of Montaigne himself, the concentrated gaiety of all the nations, and at times no inconsiderable share of their licence, interwoven with a high seriousness, a faith in goodness as firm as that of Rabelais, when he dreamed the lovely dream of the Abbey of Thélème, make Donne's work at once the most elusive, the most complex, and yet to those who can read it aright, perhaps the most satisfying type of poetry that the Renaissance in its last developments sent to enrich the English language. But the tide of classical and foreign influence was by this time setting fully into England by means of translation, and this popularising of great literature, both ancient and modern, in the vulgar tongue, acted in some sort as a check to pure scholarship.

As we have seen, there was no Humanistic movement in England of anything like the same extent as that in Italy. There was no call for a school of laborious scholars, for the correction and annotation of classical texts had been already in great measure accomplished, but the popularisation of this knowledge is a factor that, we have suggested, has not been sufficiently taken into account in explaining the phenomenon of a Shakespeare. Among the great translations we have Harrington's *Ariosto*, *The Courtier of Castiglione* by Hoby, Florio's *Montaigne*, Chapman's *Homer*, Dunbar's *Virgil*, Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, and a cloud of lesser works. It must be remembered that these things were all the literature that people had. English literature as we know it was still to come, and hence the thought of the educated English ran in classical, Italian, French, and even Spanish thoughts, for almost contemporary with Florio's Montaigne we find a translation of Cervantes. We have touched already upon the influence which intercourse with the Continental literature had upon manners, and which produced the Italianate Englishman. The word had a bad sense, but it is not without its good significance, for it was the finer product of Italian influence that made the courtier of the English Renaissance so charming a companion, so delicately expressed in fancy. It made a Leicester, a Sidney, a Raleigh, as dexterous with their pens as with their

swords, and if it degenerated into the mere euphuisms of a Lilly, yet even that mannerism lent a flavour to passages of Shakespeare that we could not well wish otherwise. It is to their Italian training that we owe the memorable innovation of Surrey and Wyatt in English poetry, the 'drumming decasyllabons' of blank verse.

But the Renaissance meant something more than a quickening of the literary sense of Europe. In its origins it is essentially literary, but it communicated its spirit to everything that interested mankind. It lent a peculiar quality of richness and intensity to life in every relation, it sweetened and it heightened thought, giving men wide horizons, and animating them to high adventure and achievement. The warmth and colour of its naturalism scarcely survived the age of Elizabeth, but the serene ideals of the classical revival were carried to a higher power in Milton. There, however, antagonistic influences have prevailed, and the Renaissance, as a force, is seeking a new direction. The curious felicity in the mere art of living, that distinguished the true children of the Renaissance, was forgotten or banned. The type was no longer produced. It is doubtful whether it will ever reappear.

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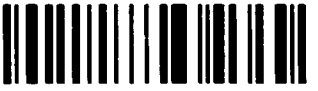
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